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PREPARATION

<i>The nature of the cross, its necessity and dignity, sec. 1, 2</i>		<i>We are to take up our cross, as followers of Christ, 1-2</i>
1.	What the cross is. By whom, and on whom, and for what cause imposed. Its necessity and dignity.	Christ's cross and ours
2.	The cross necessary. 1. To humble our pride. 2. To make us apply to God for aid. Example of David.	The cross leads us to perfect trust in God's power
<i>The manifold advantages of the cross described, sec. 3-6</i>		<i>This is needful to teach us patience and obedience, 3-6</i>
3.	To give us experience of God's presence. 3. Manifold uses of the cross. 1. Produces patience, hope, and firm confidence in God, gives us victory and perseverance. Faith invincible.	The cross permits us to experience God's faithfulness and gives us hope for the future
4.	2. Frames us to obedience. Example of Abraham. This training how useful.	The cross trains us to patience and obedience
5.	The cross necessary to subdue the wantonness of the flesh. This portrayed by an apposite simile. Various forms of the cross.	The cross as medicine
6.	3. God permits our infirmities, and corrects past faults, that he may keep us in obedience. This confirmed by a passage from Solomon and an Apostle.	The cross as fatherly chastisement
<i>The form of the cross the most excellent of all, and yet it by no means removes all sense of pain, sec. 7, 8</i>		<i>Bearing the cross in persecution and other calamities, 7-8</i>
7.	Singular consolation under the cross, when we suffer persecution for righteousness. Some parts of this consolation.	Suffering for righteousness' sake
8.	This form of the cross most appropriate to believers, and should be borne willingly and cheerfully. This cheerfulness is not unfeeling hilarity, but, while groaning under the burden, waits patiently for the Lord.	Suffering under the cross, the Christian finds consolation in God
<i>A description of warfare under the cross, and of true patience (not that of philosophers), after the example of Christ, sec. 9-11</i>		<i>The Christian meets suffering as sent by God, but with no Stoic insensibility, 9-11</i>
9.	A description of this conflict. Opposed to the vanity of the Stoics. Illustrated by the authority and example of Christ.	The Christian, unlike the Stoic, gives expression to his pain and sorrow

10.	Proved by the testimony and uniform experience of the elect. Also by the special example of the Apostle Peter. The nature of the patience required of us.	Real sorrow and real patience in conflict with one another
11.	Distinction between the patience of Christians and philosophers. The latter pretend a necessity which cannot be resisted. The former hold forth the justice of God and his care of our safety. A full exposition of this difference.	Patience according to philosophic and Christian understanding

EXPLORATORY

1. What plan does God follow in the life of all his children, beginning with Christ?

- a. *...whomever the Lord has adopted and deemed worthy of his fellowship ough to prepare themselves for a hard, toilsome and unquiet life, crammed with very many and various kinds of evil.*

How do we know there are no exceptions to this? (702, 7ff)

- a. *Beginning with Christ, his first-born, he follows this plan with all his children.*

What reason does, 'the apostle', give for this? (702, 14f)

- a. *...it behooved him to?, learn obedience through what he suffered.*

What aspect of Christ's submitting himself to hardship for our sakes does Calvin bring out in 702, 18f?

- a. *...he submitted to it for our sake to show us an example of patience in himself.*

How does it benefit us to understand this? (702, 22ff)

- a. *...in harsh and difficult conditions...a great comfort comes to us: we share Christ's sufferings in order that...we may in like manner be led through various tribulations to the same glory.*

What enables sufferings to achieve the effects that God intends? (702, 38)

- a. *...communion with him.*

2. What obligated Christ to submit to tribulation in this way? (703, 2)

- a. *...to attest and prove his obedience to the Father.*

Calvin says, *there are many reasons why we must pass our lives under a continual cross*, and then sums them all up in one phrase, which is - what? (703, 6f)

- a. *...we readily esteem our virtue above its true measure.*

What is the outcome of this excessive confidence in ourselves? (703, 9ff)

- a. *...stupid and empty confidence in the flesh;*
- b. *...insolent pride, against God himself.*

When God afflicts us what two things is he proving to us by experience? (703, 13ff)

- a. *Our, great incapacity;*
- b. *Our, frailty.*

What positive outcome, beyond our own humbling, do afflictions achieve? (703, 18 & 38f)

- a. *...we learn to call upon his power.*
- b. *...sloughing off perverse confidence in the flesh [they] betake themselves to God's grace.*

To what extent do we find God's grace to be sufficient? 703, 41)

- a. ...enough and to spare.

3. What does God's supporting hand enable Christians to do, that they would not be able to do if they only had their own resources to draw on? (704, 5)

- a. ...*patiently endure*.

What do Christians learn by experience as they practice forbearance? (704, 7f)

- a. ...*God, when there is need, provides the assistance that he has promised*.

As well as immediate support how else are Christians benefitted from the need to practice forbearance? (704, 8)

- a. *Thence, also, is their hope strengthened*.

Why does this happen? (704, 9ff)

- a. ...*it would be the height of ingratitude not to expect that in time to come God's truthfulness will be as constant and firm as they have already experienced it to be*.

Calvin then gives a catalogue of reasons why we need to bear the cross. What are they? (704, 12ff)

- a. The cross, *strikes at our perilous confidence in the flesh by:*
 - i. ...*overturning that good opinion which we falsely entertain concerning our own strength*.
 - ii. ...*unmasking our hypocrisy*
- c. *It teaches us, thus humbled, to rest upon God alone, with the result that we do not faint or yield*.
- d. *Hope follows victory in so far as the Lord, by performing what he has promised, establishes his truth for the time to come*.

What does Calvin conclude, based on the above? (704, 19ff)

- a. ...*it plainly appears how much we need the practice of bearing the cross*.

4. God has another purpose in afflicting his people, which is - what? (704, 21f)

- a. ...*to test their patience and to instruct them to obedience*.

Who benefits from this? (704, 34ff & 705, 9f)

- a. Believers, whose receipt of the grace of God is evidenced by, *unmistakable proofs*.
- b. People in general, who learn from the manifestation of patience in believers to, *esteem it as it deserves*.

What would happen to the gift of patience that God gives his people if it was not stirred into action by afflictions? (705, 13f)

- a. It would, *lie useless and pass away*.

What saying in use among non Christians indicated that fellowship with God inevitably involved being afflicted? (705, 21)

- a. Follow God.

What does this saying imply that we have to do in order to truly submit to God? (705, 33)

- a. Yield our, *hand and back to his rod*.

5. To what does Calvin compare us in this section? (705, 31)

- a. ...*mettlesome horses*.

Have mettlesome horses never been broken?

- a. No

What has happened to them? (705, 31f)

- a. They have been, *fattened in idleness for some days*.

With what results? (705, 32f)

- a. *...they cannot afterward be tamed for their high spirits.*
- b. *...nor do they recognise their rider, whose command they previously obeyed.*

What effect *should* God's goodness have on us? (705, 36f)

- a. *God's beneficence ought to have allured us to esteem and love his goodness.*

What effect does it have? (705, 35f)

- a. *...fattened and made flabby, we kick against him who has fed and nourished us.*

Why? (705, 38)

- a. Because of, *our ill will*.

What becomes necessary because, *we are repeatedly corrupted by his indulgence*? (706, 1)

- a. *...that we be restrained by some discipline.*

Our experience of God's discipline is not uniform because it is tailored to us as individuals. Do any escape? (706, 14f)

- a. *...he yet leaves no-one free.*

Why is this? (706, 14f)

- a. *...he wills to provide for the health of all...he knows that all, to a man, are diseased.*

- 6. Whenever we are afflicted - what should we do? (706, 20f)

- a. *...remembrance of our past life ought immediately to come to mind.*

Why? (706, 21ff)

- a. *...so we shall doubtless find that we have committed something deserving this sort of chastisement.*

Why does God do this? (706, 17ff)

- a. *...our most merciful Father, is keeping us, in obedience to himself.*

What is God's great objective, even as he afflicts us? (706, 29f)

- a. He does it, *to promote our salvation.*

What are we if we fail to recognise the justice behind God's discipline and his goodness to us in afflicting us? (706, 42)

- a. *...most perverse.*

What effect does God's chastisement have on unbelievers? (707, 2ff)

- a. *...unbelievers...become only worse and more obstinate.*

- 7. 707, 11f: What name does Calvin give to suffering persecution for righteousness's sake?

- a. *...the special badge of [God's] soldiery.*

What do, *the offenses and hatred of the world*, that we must suffer, imperil? (707, 18f)

- a. *...our life;*
- b. *...our fortunes;*
- c. *...our honour.*

What two qualities must we possess in order for afflictions to be made a means of encouragement to us? (707, 30)

- a. Innocence and a good conscience.

8. Is indifference to suffering a mark of a Christian? (708, 19)

a. *...such cheerfulness is not required of us as to remove all feeling of bitterness and pain,* Calvin asserts that we must feel the force of these afflictions. Why is this the case? (708, 20ff)

- a. *...in the cross there would be no forbearance of the saints unless they were tormented by pain and anguished by trouble. If there were no harshness in poverty, no torment in diseases, no sting in disgrace, no dread in death - what fortitude or moderation would there be in bearing them with indifference?*

What are we to do when tried by the feeling of bitterness? (708, 27ff)

- a. *...valiantly resisting,* surmount it.

What are we to do when, *sharply pricked*? (708, 30)

- a. *Be, restrained by the fear of God from breaking into any intemperate act.*

What are we to do when, *wounded by sorrow and grief*? (708, 32f)

- a. *...rest in the spiritual consolation of God.*

9. What is the difference between Christian and stoic forbearance? (709, 4f)

- a. *...to bear the cross is not to be utterly stupefied and to be deprived of all feeling of pain.*

The stoic definition of greatness of soul was to feel neither pain nor pleasure, to be not affected at all by any experience. What effect does such a false definition of forbearance have? (709, 12f)

- a. It banishes the power of true forbearance from human life.

Do we know Jesus's view of stoicism? (709, 19f)

- a. *...this iron philosophy which our Lord and Master has condemned.*

How do we know this? (709, 20f)

- a. *...by his word...also by his example.*

10. To what danger do we expose ourselves if we define patience (endurance?) as insensibility? (710, 1)

- a. *...despair*

Calvin mentions three types of trial, together the responses that show forbearance. What are the trials and the responses that God's grace stimulates? (710, 6ff)

- a. *...afflicted with harsh misfortune, they do not break or fall;*
- b. *...stabbed with bitterness, they are at the same time flooded with spiritual joy;*
- c. *...pressed by apprehension, they recover their breath, revived by God's consolation.*

How does he sum up the apparent contradiction between the flesh's estimate of these experiences and the way the grace of God works in believers to sustain them? (710, 10ff)

- a. *...a contradiction between their natural sense, which flees and dreads what it feels adverse to itself, and their disposition to godliness, which even through these difficulties presses towards obedience to the divine will.*

11. Outside of a Christian world view, what is the usual basis of exhortations to be patient and to forbear? (711,10)

- a. *...it must be so.*

With what double understanding does the Christian oppose this stoicism? (711, 14f)

- a. *...righteousness and equity;*
- b. *...concern for our own salvation.*

Turning to, *righteousness and equity*, first:

What thoughts do we need to be firmly gripped by when we are tried? (711, 19f)

- a. *...none of these things happen, except by the will and providence of God.*
- b. *God...does nothing except with a well-ordered justice.*

What analysis of our experience arises from these truths? (711, 20ff)

- a. Do not our innumerable and daily offences deserve to be chastised more severely...?
- b. Is it not perfectly fair that our flesh be tamed and made accustomed...to the yoke...?
- c. Are not God's right and truth worth our trouble?

Please finish this quotation: ...if God's undoubted equity appears in afflictions...(711, 26ff)

- a. *...we cannot either murmur or wrestle against it without iniquity.*

Turning to God's, *concern for our own salvation*:

Why does God (our most merciful father) assert...*that in the very act of afflicting us with the cross he is providing for our salvation?* (711, 33f)

- a. *...because that only is pleasing to us which we recognise to be for our salvation and good.*

What does this understanding on our part lead to, even when we are experiencing affliction? (712, 5ff)

- a. *...however much in bearing the cross our minds are constrained by the natural feeling of bitterness, they are as much diffused with spiritual joy.*

What does the presence of joy enable us to express? (712, 8)

- a. *...thanksgiving.*

What is it about thanksgiving that shows the necessity of the cross being, *tempered with spiritual joy?* (712, 10f & 9)

- a. *...there is nothing that ought to interrupt...the praise of the Lord and thanksgiving.*

FOR REFLECTION

1. Do I have the same theology of suffering as Calvin displays in this chapter. Do I see it as cross bearing and submit to it, recognising that through it God's purposes in my life are being taken forward?
2. Which life is the most useful for the development of Christian character ('that for which Christ Jesus has laid hold of me', Phil 3)? A life of relative ease or a life of affliction? Which life do I seek?
3. 709, 14 - is it true that among Christians of our day also there are, *new stoics*?
4. 711, 15 & 33ff. In what sense is Calvin using the word, 'Salvation'.