THOMAS BROOKS

(1608 - 1680)

"Mute Christian under the Smarting Rod" or,
"The Silent Soul with Sovereign Antidotes"

by Thomas Brooks, 1659, London.

"I was silent; I would not open my mouth, for
You are the one who has done this!" Psa 39:9

Part 1

Part 2

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CHOICE SELECTIONS

Choice selections from Thomas Brooks,
The Mute Christian Under the Smarting Rod

When He shows no anger!

"The Lord disciplines the one He loves, and punishes every son whom He receives." Heb. 12:6

There cannot be a greater evidence of God's hatred and wrath—than His *refusing* to correct men for their sinful courses and vanities!

Where God refuses to correct—there God resolves to destroy! There is no man so near God's axe—so near the flames—so near hell—as he whom God will not so much as spend a rod upon!

"Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline." Revelation 3:19

God is most angry—when He shows no anger!

Who can seriously meditate upon this, and not be silent under God's most smarting rod?

All the hell that you shall ever have!

Consider Christian, that all your . . .
trials and troubles,
calamities and miseries,
crosses and losses,
which you meet with in this world—is **all the hell that you shall ever have!**

Here and now you have your hell.
Hereafter you shall have your heaven!

This is the worst of your condition;
the best is yet to come!

Lazarus had his hell first, his heaven last; but
Dives had his heaven first, and his hell at last.

You have all your pangs, and pains, and throes here—that you shall ever have! Your ease, and rest, and pleasure—is yet to come!

Here you have all your bitters;
your sweets are yet to come!

Here you have your sorrows;
your joys are yet to come!

Here you have all your *winter nights*;
your *summer days* are yet to come!

Here you have your evil things;
your good things are yet to come!

Death will put an end to all your **sins**—
and to all your **sufferings!**

Death will be an inlet to those joys, delights, and comforts—which shall never have an end!

Who can seriously meditate upon this, and not be silent under God's most smarting rod?

Then the scum appears!

Few Christians see themselves and understand themselves rightfully. By **trials**, God reveals much of a man's sinful self to his pious self.

When the **fire** is put under the pot—**then the scum appears**; so when God tries a poor soul, Oh! how does . . .
the scum of pride,
the scum of murmuring,
the scum of distrust,
the scum of impatience,
the scum of worldliness,
the scum of carnality,
the scum of foolishness,
the scum of willfulness—
reveal itself in the heart of the poor creature?

Trials are **God's looking-glass**, in which His people see their own faults. Oh! . . .
that looseness,
that vileness,
that wretchedness,
that sink of filthiness,
that gulf of wickedness,
which trials show to be in their hearts!

"I have tested you in the furnace of affliction." Isaiah 48:10

When Munster lay sick

"Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline." Revelation 3:19

"The Lord disciplines the one He loves, and punishes every son whom He receives." Heb. 12:6

All the afflictions which come upon the saints, are **the fruits of divine love**.

When Munster lay sick, and his friends asked him how he did, and how he felt; he pointed to his sores and ulcers, whereof he was full, and said, "These are God's gems and jewels with which He decks his best friends, and to me they are more precious than all the gold and silver in the world!"

"It was good for me to be afflicted!" Psalm 119:71

God afflicts you, O Christian, in love! Therefore Luther cries out, 'Strike, Lord, strike, Lord! and spare not!'

Father knows best!

"Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in His holiness." Hebrews 12:10.

What God, our Father wills, is best.

When He wills sickness, sickness is better than health.

When He wills weakness, weakness is better than strength.

When He wills poverty, poverty is better than wealth.

When He wills reproach, reproach is better than honor.

When He wills death, death is better than life.

As God is **wisdom** itself, and so knows that which is best; so He is **goodness** itself, and therefore cannot do anything but that which is best—therefore remain silent before the Lord.

Everything on this side hell is mercy

Oh! labor every day to be more **humble** and more low and little in your own eyes. 'Who am I,' says the humble soul—'but that God should cross me in this mercy, and take away that mercy, and pass a sentence of death upon every mercy? I am not worthy of the least mercy, **I deserve not a crumb of mercy**, I have forfeited every mercy.'

Only by pride comes contention. It is only pride that puts men upon contending with God and men.

A humble soul will lie quiet at the foot of God, it will be contented with bare necessities. A dinner of green herbs relishes well with the humble man's palate; whereas a stalled ox is but a coarse dish to a proud man's stomach.

A humble heart thinks none less than himself, nor none worse than himself.

A humble heart looks upon small mercies as great mercies; and great afflictions as small afflictions; and small afflictions as no afflictions; and therefore sits mute and quiet under all. Do but keep humble, and you will keep silent before the Lord.

Pride kicks, and flings, and frets; but a humble man has still his hand upon his mouth. **Everything on this side hell is mercy**—much mercy, rich mercy to a humble soul; and therefore he remains mute under the smarting rod.

One unmortified lust!

It is not your strongest resolutions or purposes, without the grace of the Spirit, which can overmaster a lust. A *soul-sore* will continue to run—though we resolve and say it shall not. It was the *blood* of the sacrifice, and the *oil*, which cleansed the leper in the law. And by them is meant the blood of Christ and the grace of His Spirit. Lev. 14:14-16. It was a touch of Christ's garment which cured the woman of her bloody issue.

Your strongest resolutions or purposes may hide a sin, but cannot quench it. They may cover a sin, but cannot cut off a sin. A black patch may cover a sore—but it does not cure it! Neither is it the papists' purgatories, watchings, whippings, nor the kissing of the statue of St. Francis, or licking of lepers' sores—which will cleanse the fretting leprosy of sin!

In the strength of Christ, and in the power of the Spirit—set soundly upon the mortifying of every lust! Oh, hug none, indulge none—but resolvedly set upon **the ruin of every lust!**

One leak in a ship will sink it!

One stab strikes Goliad just as dead—as twenty-three did Caesar!

One Delilah may do Samson as much mischief as all the Philistines!

One broken wheel spoils the whole clock!

One vein bleeding will let out all the vitals!

One fly will spoil a whole box of ointment!

One bitter herb will spoil all the pottage!

By eating one apple, Adam lost paradise!

One lick of honey endangered Jonathan's life!

One Achan was a trouble to all Israel!

One Jonah raises a storm and becomes load too heavy for the whole ship! Just so—**one unmortified lust** will raise very strong storms and tempests in the soul! And therefore, as you would have a blessed calm and quietness in your own spirits under your sharpest trials, set thoroughly upon the work of mortification.

Gideon had seventy sons, and but one bastard child,
yet that bastard child destroyed all his seventy sons!

Ah, Christian! do you not know what a world of mischief **one unmortified lust** may do? And therefore let nothing satisfy you but the blood of all your lusts!

You have been long a-gathering rust

Oh! but **my** afflictions are greater than other men's afflictions are! **Oh! there is no affliction like my affliction!** How can I not murmur?

It may be your **sins** are greater than other men's sins. If you have sinned against . . .
more light,
more love,
more mercies,
more promises,
than others—no wonder if your afflictions are greater than others! If this be your case, you have more cause to be mute than to murmur!

It may be that the Lord sees that it is very **needful** that your afflictions should be greater than others.

It may be your heart is **harder** than other men's hearts, and **prouder** and **stouter** than other men's hearts, it may be your heart is more **impure** than others, and more **carnal** than others, or else more **selfish** and more **worldly** than others, or else more **deceitful** and more **hypocritical** than others, or else more **cold** and **careless** than others, or more **formal** and **lukewarm** than others.

Now, if this is your case, certainly God sees it very **necessary**, for . . .
the breaking of your **hard** heart, and
the humbling of your **proud** heart, and
the cleansing of your **foul** heart, and
the spiritualizing of your **carnal** heart, etc.,
that your afflictions should be greater than others; and therefore do not murmur!

Where the **disease** is strong, the **remedy** must be strong—else the cure will never be wrought! God is a wise physician, and He would never give strong medicine—if a weaker one could effect the cure!

The more **rusty** the NAIL is, the oftener we put it into the fire to purify it; and the more **crooked** it is, the more blows and the harder blows we give to straighten it.

You have been long a-gathering rust; and therefore, if God deal thus with you, you have no cause to complain.

"For the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and punishes every son whom He receives." Heb. 12:6

If you attempt to enthrone the creature!

O Christian! God has removed one of your sweetest mercies, comforts, or enjoyments! It may be you have over-loved them, and over-prized them, and over-much delighted yourself in them. It may be they have often had your heart—when they should have had but your hand. It may be that care, that concern, that confidence, that joy—which should have been expended upon more noble objects—has been expended upon them!

Your heart is Christ's bed of spices—and it may be you have bedded your mercies with you—when Christ has been made to lie outside! You have had room for them—when you have had none for Him! They have had the best—when the worst have been counted good enough for Christ!

It is said of Reuben, that he went up to his father's bed, Gen. 49:4. Ah! how often has one creature comfort, and sometimes another—been put in between Christ and your souls! How often have your dear enjoyments gone up to Christ's bed! Your near and dear mercies have come into **Christ's bed of love**—your hearts!

Now, if you take a husband, a child, a friend—into **that room in your soul** which only belongs to God—He will either embitter it, remove it, or be the death of it.

If once the love of a wife runs out more to a servant, than to her husband—the husband will remove that servant; though otherwise he was a servant worth gold.

Now, if God has stripped you of that very mercy with which you have often committed spiritual adultery and idolatry—have you any cause to murmur?

There are those who love their mercies into their graves—who hug their mercies to death—who kiss them until they kill them! Many a man has slain his mercies—by setting too great a value upon them! Many a man has sunk his *ship of mercy*—by overloading it. Over-loved mercies are seldom long-lived. The way to lose your mercies is to indulge them! The way to destroy them is to fix your minds and hearts upon them. You may write bitterness and death upon that mercy first—which has first taken away your heart from God.

Christian! Your heart is Christ's royal throne, and in this throne Christ will be chief! He will endure no competitor! **If you attempt to enthrone the creature**—be it ever so near and dear unto you—Christ will dethrone it! He will destroy it! He will quickly lay them in a bed of dust —who shall aspire to His royal throne!

*"This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am about to desecrate my sanctuary—the stronghold in which you take pride, **the delight of your eyes, the object of your affection**. The sons and daughters you left behind will fall by the sword!"* Ezekiel 24:21

You are the one who has done this!

*"I was silent; I would not open my mouth, for **You are the one who has done this!**"* Psalm 39:9

In the words you may observe three things:

1. The person speaking, and that is, David. David a king, David a saint, David 'a man after God's own heart,' David a Christian. And here we are to look upon David, not as a king, but as a Christian, as a man whose heart was right with God.

2. The action and carriage of David under the hand of God, in these words—'I was silent; I would not open my mouth.'

3. The reason of this humble and sweet carriage of his, in these words—'for You are the one who has done this!'

The proposition is this: That it is the great duty and concern of gracious souls to be mute and silent under the greatest afflictions, the saddest providences, and sharpest trials that they meet with in this world.

David's silence is an acknowledgment of God as the author of all the afflictions that come upon us. There is no sickness so little, but God has a finger in it; though it be but the aching of the little finger.

David looks through all secondary causes to the first cause, and is silent. He sees a hand of God in all, and so sits mute and quiet. The sight of God in an affliction is of an irresistible efficacy to silence the heart, and to stop the mouth of a godly man.

Men who don't see God in an affliction, are easily cast into a feverish fit, they will quickly be in a flame; and when their passions are up, and their hearts on fire, they will begin to be saucy, and make no bones of telling God to His teeth, that they do well to be angry. Those who will not acknowledge God to be the author of all their afflictions, will be ready enough to fall in with that mad principle of the Manichees, who maintained the devil to be the author of all calamities; as if there could be any evil or affliction in the city, and the Lord have no hand in it, Amos 3:6.

If God's hand be not seen in the affliction, the heart will do nothing but fret and rage under affliction.

Those who can see the ordering hand of God in all their afflictions, will, with David, lay their hands upon their mouths, **when the rod of God is upon their backs!**

They see that it was a Father who put those bitter cups in their hands; and love that laid those heavy crosses upon their shoulders; and grace that put those yokes around their necks—and this caused much quietness and calmness in their spirits.

When God's people are under the rod, He makes by His Spirit and word, such sweet music in their souls, as allays all tumultuous motions, passions, and perturbations.

*"I was silent; I would not open my mouth, for **You are the one who has done this!**"* Psalm 39:9

All honey would harm us

"Weeping may endure for a night—but joy comes in the morning." Psalm 30:5

Their mourning shall last but until morning.

God will turn . . .
  their winter's night into a summer's day,
  their sighing into singing,
  their grief into gladness,
  their mourning into music,
  their bitter into sweet,
  their wilderness into a paradise.

The life of a Christian is filled up with interchanges of
  sickness and health,
  weakness and strength,
  want and wealth,
  disgrace and honor,
  crosses and comforts,
  miseries and mercies,
  joys and sorrows,
  mirth and mourning.

All honey would harm us; all wormwood would undo us—a composition of both is the best way to keep our souls in a healthy constitution. It is best and most for the health of the soul—that *the warm south wind of mercy*, and *the cold north wind of adversity*—do both blow upon it. And though every wind which blows, shall blow good to the saints; yet certainly **their sins die most**, and **their graces thrive best**, when they are under the frigid, drying, nipping north wind of calamity, as well as under the warm, nourishing south wind of mercy and prosperity.

The more a Christian is tempted

God had but one Son without corruption—but He had none without temptation!

By temptations the Lord will make His people more and more conformable to the image of His Son.

Christ was much tempted—He was often in *the school of temptation*; and **the more a Christian is tempted**, the more into the likeness of Christ he will be transformed. The most tempted Christians do most resemble Christ in meekness, lowliness, holiness, heavenliness, etc. The image of Christ is most fairly stamped upon tempted souls. Tempted souls are much in looking up to Jesus—and every gracious look upon Christ changes the soul more and more into the image of Christ. Tempted souls experience much of the succouring of Christ, and the more they experience the sweet of the succourings of Christ—the more they grow up into the likeness of Christ.

Temptations are the tools by which the Father does more and more carve, form, and fashion His precious saints into the similitude and likeness of His dearest Son.

By temptations, God makes . . .
  sin more hateful, and
  the world less delightful, and
  relations less hurtful.

Distasteful temptations

No man is the less loved by God, because he is tempted. Those whom God loves best—are usually tempted most. Witness David, Job, Joshua, Peter, Paul, yes, Christ Himself—who, as He was beloved above all others, so He was tempted above all others! He was tempted to question His Sonship; He was tempted to the worst idolatry, even to worship the devil himself; to the greatest infidelity, to distrust His Father's providence, and to use unlawful means for necessary supplies; and to self-murder, 'Cast yourself down!' etc.

God had but one Son without corruption—but He had none without temptation!

Those who were once glorious on earth, and are now triumphing in heaven—have been severely tempted and assaulted by Satan. It is as natural and common for the choicest saints to be tempted—as it is for the sun to shine, the bird to fly, the fire to burn. The eagle complains not of her wings, nor the peacock of her train of feathers, nor the nightingale of her voice—because these are natural to them. No more should saints of their temptations, because they are natural to them.

"Our whole life is nothing but a temptation!"

The best men have been the worst tempted!

Temptations which are resisted and bewailed, will never hurt you, nor harm you.

Distasteful temptations seldom or never prevail. So long as the **soul** distastes them and the **will** remains firmly averse against them—**they can do no hurt**. So long as the language of the soul is, 'Get behind me, Satan!' the soul is safe.

It is not Satan tempting—but my assenting;
it is not his enticing—but my yielding;
which undoes me!

Temptations may be troubles to my mind—but they are not sins upon my soul—while I am in arms against them. If your heart trembles and your flesh quakes when Satan tempts—your condition is safe enough. If Satan's temptations are your greatest afflictions—his temptations shall never conquer you nor harm you!

But a flea-bite!

Christian! Your present afflictions are not great—if compared with the afflictions and torments of many of the damned, who when they were in this world, never sinned at so high a rate as you have done! There are many now in hell, who never sinned against such **clear light** as you have done, nor against such **special love** as you have done, nor against such **precious mercies** as you have done! Certainly there are many now a-roaring in everlasting burnings, who never sinned as you have done!

What are your afflictions, your present torments—compared to the torments of the damned, whose torments are . . .
  numberless,
  bottomless,
  remediless, and
  endless!
Whose pains are without intermission of mitigation; who have:
  weeping served for the first course, and
  gnashing of teeth for the second course, and
  the gnawing worm for the third course, and
  intolerable pain for the fourth course!
Yet the pain of the body is least part of pain. The very soul of sorrow and pain is the soul's sorrow and pain! The everlasting alienation and separation from God is served for the fifth course!

Ah, Christian! how can you seriously think on these things and not lay your hand upon your mouth—even when you are under the greatest temporal sufferings? Your sins have been far greater than many of those who are now in hell, and your 'great' afflictions are **but a flea-bite!** compared to theirs! Therefore hush your murmuring, and be silent before the Lord!

Our present sufferings

Such is the **splendor**, the **brightness**, the **glory**, the **happiness**, and **blessedness**—which is reserved for the saints in heaven—that had I all the tongues of men on earth, and all the excellencies of the angels in heaven—yet I would not be able to conceive, nor to express that vision of glory to you! That glory is inconceivable and inexpressible! It is best to be hastening there, that we may feel and enjoy that which we shall never be able to declare!

All the troubles, afflictions, and sorrows of this life, in comparison with eternal happiness and blessedness, are to be considered as nothing; they are but as the point of a pin—compared to the starry heavens.

"I consider that ***our present sufferings*** *are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us!"*
Romans 8:18

And will you murmur?

Is not Christ your treasure?
Is not heaven your inheritance—
and will you murmur?

Have you not much in hand, and more in hope?
Have you not much in possession, but much
more reserved in heaven—
and will you murmur?

Has not God given you. . .
a changed heart,
a renewed nature, and
a sanctified soul—
and will you murmur?

Has He not given you. . .
Himself to satisfy you,
His Son to save you,
His Spirit to lead you,
His grace to adorn you,
His covenant to assure you,
His mercy to pardon you,
His righteousness to clothe you—
and will you murmur?

Has He not made you. . .
a friend,
a son,
a brother,
a bride,
an heir—
and will you murmur?

Has not God often turned. . .
your water into wine,
your brass into silver, and
your silver into gold—
and will you murmur?

When you were dead, did not He quicken you?
When you were lost, did not He seek you?
When you were wounded, did not He heal you?
When you were falling, did not He support you?
When you were down, did not He raise you?
When you were staggering, did not He establish you?
When you were erring, did not He correct you?
When you were tempted, did not He support you? and
When you went in dangers, did not He deliver you?—
and will you murmur?

What! you who are so highly advanced and exalted above many thousands in the world? Murmuring suits none so badly as saints.

Some Delilah

God cures David of adultery, by killing his endeared child.

There is **some Delilah**—**some darling, some beloved sin or other**—that a Christian's calling, condition, constitution, or temptations—leads him to play with, and to hug in his own bosom. As in a plot of ground that lies untilled, among the great variety of weeds there is usually **some master-weed**, which is more plenteous and more repulsive than all the rest.

So it is also in the souls of men—though there be **a general mixture and medley of all evil and corrupt qualities**, yet there is some one sin which is usually paramount, which is most powerful and prevalent—which sways and manifests itself more eminently and evidently than any other of them do.

So, though the root of sin and bitterness has spread itself over all, yet every man has his inclination to one kind of sin—rather than another. And this may be called a man's besetting sin, his bosom sin, his darling sin.

Now, it is one of the hardest works in this world to subdue and bring under control, this bosom sin! Oh! the prayers, the tears, the sighs, the sobs, the groans, the distress that it will cost a Christian before he subdues this darling sin!

A man may easily subdue and mortify such and such sins—but when it comes to the master-sin, to the bosom-sin, oh! what tugging and pulling is there! what striving and struggling is there to get off that sin, to get down that sin!

Now, if the Lord, by smiting you in some near and dear enjoyment, shall draw out your heart to fall upon the smiting of your master-sin; and shall so sanctify the affliction, as to make it issue in the mortification of your bosom corruption; what eminent cause will you have rather to bless Him, than to sit down and murmur against Him! And doubtless if you are dear to God—God will, by striking your dearest mercy, put you upon striking at your darling sin! Therefore do not murmur, even **when God touches the apple of your eye**; even when He has snatched the fairest and the sweetest flower out of your bosom.

Paulinus Nolanus

Paulinus Nolanus, when his city was taken from him, prayed thus, "Lord! let me not be troubled at the loss of my gold, silver, honor—for You are all, and much more than all these unto me!"

Christian! In the absence of all your sweetest enjoyments, Christ will be all in all unto you!

"My **jewels** are my husband," said one.

"My **ornaments** are my two sons," said another.

"My **treasures** are my friends," said yet another.

And so may a Christian, under his greatest losses say—"Christ is my richest jewel, my chief treasure, my best ornament, my sweetest delight! What all these things are to a carnal heart, to a worldly heart—that and more—is Christ to me!"

"Christ is all!" Colossians 3:11

A jewel more worth than a world!

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."
Ephesians 5:16

Time is a jewel more worth than a world!

Time is not yours to dispose of as you please; it is a glorious talent that men must be accountable for, as well as any other talent. Of all talents, time is the hardest well to improve. Ah, beloved, have not you need to improve your time—who have much work to do in a short time:
your souls to save,
a God to honor,
a Christ to exalt,
a hell to escape,
a race to run,
a crown to win,
temptations to withstand,
corruptions to conquer,
afflictions to bear,
mercies to improve, and
your generation to serve.

A man too big for temptations to conquer!

Communion with God is . . .
the life of your graces,
the sweetener of all ordinances, providences, and mercies,
the strengthener of your hearts and hands,
the soul of your comforts, and
the crown of your souls.

Communion with God makes the bitter things sweet; and massive things light.

Nothing like communion with God to fence you against temptations, to sweeten all afflictions, and to make you cleave to God in the face of all troubles and oppositions.

A man high in communion with God, is **a man too big for temptations to conquer**, or troubles to overcome. Souls that have no communion, or but little communion, with God—they are usually as soon conquered as tempted, as soon vanquished as assaulted.

Such lessons!

"Blessed is the man You ***chasten****, O Lord, the man You* ***teach*** *from Your law."* Psalm 94:12

All the chastening in the world, without divine teaching, will never make a man blessed. That man who finds correction attended with instruction, and lashing with lessoning—is a happy man.

If God, by the affliction which is upon you, shall teach you:
how to loathe sin more, and
how to trample upon the world more, and
how to walk with God more—
your afflictions are in love.

If God shall teach you by afflictions:
how to die to sin more, and
how to die to your relations more,
and how to die to your self-interest more—
your afflictions are in love.

If God shall teach you by afflictions:
how to live to Christ more,
how to lift up Christ more, and
how to long for Christ more—
your afflictions are in love.

If God shall teach you by afflictions:
how to mind heaven more,
how to live in heaven more, and
how to fit for heaven more—
your afflictions are in love.

If God by afflictions shall teach:
your proud heart how to lie more low,
your hard heart how to grow more tender,
your censorious heart how to grow more charitable,
your carnal heart how to grow more spiritual,
your froward heart how to grow more quiet—
your afflictions are in love.

When God teaches your thoughts as well as your brains, your heart as well as your head, any of these lessons—your afflictions are in love.

Where God loves, He afflicts in love; and wherever God afflicts in love, there He will, sooner or later, teach such souls **such lessons** as shall do them good to all eternity.

If our afflictions are so sanctified

If our afflictions are so sanctified as that they draw out our soul . . .
to love the Lord more, and
to fear the Lord more, and
to please the Lord more, and
to cleave to the Lord more, and
to wait on the Lord more, and
to walk with the Lord more—
then they are sent in love. Oh, then they are the wounds of a friend indeed!

If the afflictions that are upon us do . . .
increase our courage,
strengthen our patience,
raise our faith,
inflame our love, and
enliven our hopes—
certainly they are sent in love, and all our wounds are the wounds of a friend.

If this cockatrice be not crushed in the egg!

There is infinitely more evil in the least sin—than there is in the greatest miseries and afflictions that can possibly come upon you! Yes, there is more evil in the least sin—than there is in all the troubles that ever come upon the world; yes, than there is in all the miseries and torments of hell! The least sin . . .
is an offense to the great God;
is a wrong to the immortal soul;
is a breach of God's righteous law;
cannot be washed away but by the blood of Jesus;
will shut the soul out of heaven, and
shut the soul up as a prisoner in hell forever and ever!

The least sin is rather to be avoided and prevented—than the greatest sufferings. **If this cockatrice be not crushed in the egg**—it will soon become a serpent!

Sin, if but thought on and pondered—
will break out into action—
action into custom—
custom into habit—and then
both body and soul are lost irrecoverably to all eternity!

The least sin is very dangerous!
Caesar was stabbed to death with a small needle;
Herod was eaten up by small worms;
Pope Adrian was choked with a gnat;
a mouse is but little, yet kills an elephant if he gets up into his trunk;
a scorpion is little, yet able to sting a lion to death;
though the leopard be great, yet he is poisoned with a head of garlic;
the least spark may consume the greatest house;
the least leak will sink the greatest ship;
a whole arm has been gangrened by a pick of the little finger;
a little opened door may betray the greatest city;
a pinch of poison diffuses itself into all parts, until it strangles
the vital spirits, and turns out the soul from the body.

If the serpent can but wriggle in his tail by an evil thought, he will soon make a surprise of the soul—as you see in that sad instance of Adam and Eve.

He who has deserved a hanging

"Why should any living man complain when punished for his sins?" Lamentations 3:39

He who has deserved a hanging has no reason to charge the judge with cruelty—if he escapes with a whipping!

And we who have deserved a damning have no reason to charge God for being too severe—if we escape with a fatherly lashing!

He never lacks an apple for an Eve

It is ten thousand times a greater judgment and affliction—to be given to a fretful spirit, a froward spirit, a muttering spirit under an affliction—than it is to be afflicted. This is both the devil's sin, and the devil's punishment. God is still afflicting, crossing and vexing him; and he is still a-fretting, repining, vexing, and rising up against God. No sin like the devil's sin; no punishment like the devil's punishment.

A man were better to have all the afflictions of all the afflicted throughout the world at once upon him—than to be given up to a froward spirit—to a muttering, murmuring heart under the least affliction. When you see a soul fretting, vexing, and stamping under the mighty hand of God, you see one of Satan's first-born, one who resembles him to the life. No child can be so much like the father, as this froward soul is like to the father of lies.

Though he has been in chains almost this six thousand years, yet he has never lain still one day, nor one night, no, nor one hour in all this time—but is still a-fretting, vexing, tossing and tumbling in his chains—like a princely bedlam.

He is a lion—not a lamb;
a roaring lion—not a sleepy lion;
not a lion standing still—but a lion going up and down.
He is not satisfied with the prey he has already gotten—
but is restless in his designs to fill hell with souls.

He never lacks . . .
an apple for an Eve,
nor a grape for a Noah,
nor a change of clothing for a Gehazi,
nor a wedge of gold for an Achan,
nor a crown for an Absalom,
nor a bag of silver for a Judas,
nor a world for a Demas!

If you look into one company, there you shall find Satan dishing out his meat to every palate. If you look into another company, there you shall find him fitting a lace to every shoe. If you look into a third company, there you shall find him suiting a garment to every back. He is under wrath, and cannot but be restless. Here, with **Jael**, he allures poor souls in with milk—and murders them with a nail! There, with **Joab**, he embraces with one hand—and stabs with another! Here with **Judas**, he kisses—and betrays! And there, with the **whore of Babylon**, he presents a golden cup—with poison in it! He cannot be quiet, though his chains be always on!

And the more unquiet any are under the rebukes of God, the more they resemble Satan—whose whole life is filled up with vexing and fretting against the Lord. Let not any think, says Luther, that the devil is now dead, nor yet asleep; for as he who keeps Israel, so he who hates Israel, neither slumbers nor sleeps!

He has a mint constantly going in hell

Christians should be mute and silent under their afflictions, because hereby they shall cross and frustrate Satan's great design and expectation. In all the afflictions he brought upon **Job**, Satan's design was not so much to make Job a beggar—as it was to make him a blasphemer; it was not so much to make Job outwardly miserable—as it was to make Job inwardly miserable, by occasioning him to mutter and murmur against the righteous hand of God, that so he might have had some matter of accusation against him to the Lord.

Satan is the unwearied accuser of the brethren. Rev. 12:10, *"The accuser of the brethren is cast down, who accuses them before our God day and night."* Satan is the great tempter and accuser between God and His children. **He has a mint constantly going in hell**, where, as an untiring mint-master, he is still coming and hammering out of accusations against the saints! First, he tempts and allures souls to sin—and then accuses them of those very sins he has tempted them to—so that he may disgrace them before God, and bring them, if it were possible, out of favor with God. And though he knows beforehand that God and His people are, by the bond of the covenant, and by the blood of the Redeemer—so closely united that they can never be severed—yet such is his rage and wrath, envy and malice, that he will endeavor that which he knows he shall never effect!

Could he but have made Job froward or fretting under the rod, he would have quickly carried the tidings to heaven, and have been so bold as to have asked God whether this was a posture befitting such a person, of whom God Himself had given so glorious a character! Satan knows that there is more evil in the least sin—than there is in all the afflictions that can be inflicted upon a person; and if he could have but made a breach upon Job's patience, ah, how would he have insulted over God himself! But Job, by remaining mute and silent under all his trials, puts Satan to a blush, and spoils all his projects at once. The best way to outwit the devil, is to be silent under the hand of God. He who mutters is foiled by Satan—but he who is silent overcomes him; and to conquer a devil is more than to conquer a world!

Can a worm ward off the blow of the Almighty?

It is fruitless and futile to strive, to contest or contend with God. No man has ever got anything, by muttering or murmuring under the hand of God—except it has been more frowns, blows, and wounds. Those who will not lie quiet and still, when mercy has tied them with silken cords—justice will put them in iron chains! If *golden fetters* will not hold you, *iron fetters* shall! If Jonah will vex and fret and fling; justice will fling him overboard, to cool him, and quell him, and keep him prisoner in the whale's belly until he is vomited up, and his spirit made quiet before the Lord.

What you get by struggling and grumbling—you may put in your eye, and weep it out when you are done—*"But am I the one they are provoking? declares the Lord. Are they not rather harming themselves, to their own shame? Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: My anger and My wrath will be poured out on this place, on man and beast, on the trees of the field and on the fruit of the ground, and it will burn and not be quenched."* Jeremiah 7:19-20. *"Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?"* 1 Cor. 10:22.

Zanchy observes these two things from these words:

1. That it is foolish to be provoking God to wrath, because He is stronger than we.

2. That though God be stronger than we, yet there are those who do provoke Him to wrath. And certainly there are none who do more to provoke Him than those who fume and fret when His hand is upon them!

Though the cup be bitter—yet it is put into your hand by your Father! Though the cross be heavy—yet He who has laid it on your shoulders will bear the heaviest end of it Himself! Why, then, should you mutter? Shall bears and lions take blows and knocks from their keepers; and will you not take a few blows and knocks from the keeper of Israel? Why should the clay contend with the potter, or the creature with his Creator, or the servant with his master, or weakness with strength, or a poor nothing creature with an omnipotent God? Can stubble stand before the fire? Can chaff abide before the whirlwind? **Can a worm ward off the blow of the Almighty?**

A froward and impatient spirit under the hand of God will but add chain to chain, cross to cross, yoke to yoke, and burden to burden. The more men tumble and toss in their feverish fits, the worse they distemper; and the longer it will be before the cure be effected. The easiest and the surest way of cure, is to lie still and quiet until the poison of the distemper be sweat out. Where patience has its perfect work, there the cure will be certain and easy.

When a man has his broken leg set, he lies still and quiet, and so his cure is easily and speedily wrought. But when a horse's leg is set, he frets and flings, he flounces and flies out, unjointing it again and again, and so his cure is the more difficult and tedious. Those Christians who, under the hand of God, are like the horse or mule—fretting and flinging—will but add to their own sorrows and sufferings, and put the day of their deliverance further off.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous

The choicest saints are *"born to troubles as the sparks fly upwards"*, Job 5:7. *"**Many are the afflictions of the righteous**."* Psalm 34:19. God, who is infinite in wisdom and matchless in goodness, has ordered troubles, yes, many troubles to come trooping in upon us on every side. Our crosses seldom come single; they usually come treading one upon the heels of another; they are like April showers, no sooner is one over but another comes. And yet, Christians, it is mercy, it is rich mercy, that every affliction is not an execution, that every correction is not a damnation.

It was good for me to be afflicted!

"It was good for me to be afflicted!" Psalm 119:71

A gracious soul secretly concludes—as stars shine brightest in the night, so God will make my soul shine and glisten like gold, while I am *in* this furnace—and when I come *out* of the furnace of affliction. 'He knows the way that I take; and when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold!' Job 23:10.

Surely, as the taste of honey opened Jonathan's eyes; so this cross, this affliction—shall open my eyes. By this stroke I shall come to have a clearer sight of my *sins* and of my *self*, and a fuller sight of my *God!* Job 33:27-28; 40:4-5; 13:1-7.

Surely this affliction shall proceed in the purging away of my dross! Isaiah 1:25.

Surely as ploughing of the ground kills the weeds, and harrowing breaks hard clods; so these afflictions shall kill my sins, and soften my heart! Hosea 5:15, 6:1-3.

Surely as the plaster draws out the infectious core; so the afflictions which are upon me shall draw out the core of *pride*, the core of *self-love*, the core of *envy*, the core of *earthliness*, the core of *formality*, the core of *hypocrisy!* Psalm 119:67, 71.

Surely by these afflictions, the Lord will crucify my heart more and more to the world; and the world to my heart! Gal. 6:14; Psalm 131:1-3.

Surely by these afflictions, the Lord will keep pride from my soul! Job 33:14-21.

Surely these afflictions are but the Lord's pruning-knives, by which He will bleed my sins, and prune my heart, and make it more fertile and fruitful! They are but the Lord's potion, by which He will clear me, and rid me of those spiritual diseases and maladies, which are most deadly and dangerous to my soul!

Affliction is such a *healing potion*, as will carry away all soul-diseases, better than all other remedies! Zech. 13:8-9.

Surely these afflictions shall increase my spiritual communion with God! Rom. 5:3-4.

Surely by these afflictions, I shall be made to partake more of God's holiness! Heb. 12:10. As black soap makes white clothes—so do sharp afflictions make holy hearts!

Surely by these afflictions, the Lord will draw out my heart more and more to seek Him! 'In their afflictions they will seek Me early.' Hosea 5:15. In times of affliction, Christians will industriously, speedily, early seek unto their Lord!

Surely by these trials and troubles, the Lord will fix my soul more than ever upon the great concernments of the eternal world! John 14:1-3; Rom. 8:17, 18; 2 Cor. 4:16-18.

Surely by these afflictions the Lord will work in me more tenderness and compassion towards those who are afflicted! Hebrews 10:34, 13:3.

Surely these afflictions are but *God's love-tokens!* 'As many as I love—I rebuke and chasten,' Rev. 3:19. So says the holy Christian—'O my soul! be quiet, be still. All is sent in love, all is a fruit of divine favor. I see honey upon the top of every twig; I see the rod is but a rosemary branch; I have sugar with my gall, and wine with my wormwood; therefore be silent, O my soul!'

Afflictions abase the carnal attractions of the world outside us—which might entice us! Affliction abates the lustiness of the flesh within us—which might otherwise ensnare us!

Afflictions humble us and keep us low! Holy hearts will be humble under the afflicting hand of God. When God's rod is upon their backs—their mouths shall be in the dust! A godly heart will lie lowest, when the hand of God is lifted highest.

All this proves that affliction is a mighty advantage to us!

"***It was good for me to be afflicted!***" Psalm 119:71

The honey and the sting!

"For He does not willingly (or as the Hebrew has it, 'from His heart') bring affliction or grief to the children of men." Lamentations 3:33

Christians conclude that God's heart was not in their afflictions, though His hand was. He takes no delight to afflict His children; it goes against His heart. It is . . .
  a grief to Him to be grievous to them,
  a pain to Him to be punishing of them,
  a sorrow to Him to be striking them.

He has no will, no desire, no inclination, no disposition, to that work of afflicting of His people. And therefore He calls it 'His strange work.' Isaiah 28:21.

Mercy and punishment—they flow from God, as **the honey and the sting** from the bee. The bee yields honey of her own nature—but she does not sting but when she is provoked.

God takes delight in showing of mercy. Micah 7:18. He takes no pleasure in giving His people up to adversity. Hosea 11:8.

Mercy and kindness flows from Him freely, naturally. He is never severe, never harsh. He never stings, He never terrifies us—but when He is sadly provoked by us.

God's hand sometimes may lie very hard upon His people, when His heart, His affections, at those very times may be yearning towards them. Jeremiah 31:18-20.

No man can tell the heart of God—by His hand. God's hand of **mercy** may be open to those against whom His heart is set—as you see in the rich poor fool, and Dives, in the Gospel. And His hand of **severity** may lie hard upon those on whom He has set His heart—as you may see in Job and Lazarus.

You have a greater interest in me, than I have in myself

The godly man gives himself up to God. The secret language of the soul is this—'Lord, here am I; do with me what You please, I give up myself to be at Your disposal.'

There was a good woman, who, when she was sick, being asked whether she were willing to live or die, answered, 'Whichever God pleases.' But, said one who stood by, 'If God would refer it to you, which would you choose?' 'Truly,' said she, 'if God would refer it to me, I would even refer it right back to Him again.' This was a soul worth gold.

'Well,' says a gracious soul, 'The **ambitious** man gives himself up to his honors, but I give up myself unto God. The **voluptuous** man gives himself up to his pleasures, but I give up myself to God. The **covetous** man gives himself up to his bags of money, but I give up myself to God. The **wanton** man gives himself up to his lust, but I give up myself to God. The **drunkard** gives himself up to his cups, but I give up myself to God. The **papist** gives up himself to his idols, but I give myself to God. The **Turk** gives up himself to his Mahomet, but I give up myself to God. The **heretic** gives up himself to his heretical opinions, but I give up myself to God. Lord! lay what burden You will upon me—only let Your everlasting arms be under me!

Strike, Lord, strike, and spare not, for I submit to Your will. **You have a greater interest in me, than I have in myself**; and therefore I give up myself unto You, and am willing to be at Your disposal, and am ready to receive whatever impression You shall stamp upon me.

O blessed Lord! have You not again and again said unto me, as once the king of Israel said to the king of Syria, 'I am yours, and all that I have is yours,' 1 Kings 20:4.

God says, "I am yours, O soul! to save you!
My mercy is yours to pardon you!
My blood is yours to cleanse you!
My merits are yours to justify you!
My righteousness is yours to clothe you!
My Spirit is yours to lead you!
My grace is yours to enrich you!
My glory is yours to reward you!"

"And therefore," says a gracious soul, "I cannot but make a resignation of myself unto You. Lord! here I am, do with me as seems good in Your own eyes. I resign up myself to your will."

Whatever weather pleases God—pleases me!

I have read of a gentleman, who, meeting with a shepherd in a misty morning, asked him what weather it would be? 'It will be,' said the shepherd, 'that weather which pleases me.' And being courteously requested to express his meaning, replied, 'Sir, it shall be whatever weather pleases God; and **whatever weather pleases God—pleases me!**'

Lay your hand upon your mouth, and be silent

"Be silent before the Lord and wait patiently for Him." Psalm 37:7

I charge you, O my soul, not to mutter, nor to murmur. I command you, O my soul, to be silent under the afflicting hand of God. Peace, O my soul! be still, leave your muttering, leave your murmuring, leave your complaining, leave your chafing, and vexing—and **lay your hand upon your mouth, and be silent**. O my soul! be quiet, be silent, else you will one day be called in question for all those inward mutterings, uproars, and passions that are in you, seeing no sufficient cause can be produced why you should murmur, quarrel, or wrangle—under the righteous hand of God.

The meritorious cause of all our sorrows and sufferings

"Why should any living man complain when punished for his sins? Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord." Lamentations 3:39-40

"I will be patient as the Lord punishes me, for I have sinned against Him." Micah 7:9

Sins is **the meritorious cause of all our sorrows and sufferings**. In all our sorrows we should read our sins! When God's hand is upon our backs, our hands should be upon our sins.

When a Christian is under the afflicting hand of God, he may well say, 'I may thank . . .
  this proud heart of mine,
  this worldly heart of mine,
  this froward heart of mine,
  this formal heart of mine,
  this dull heart of mine,
  this backsliding heart of mine,
  this self-seeking heart of mine—for . . .
    this cup so bitter,
    this pain so grievous,
    this loss so great,
    this disease so desperate,
    this wound so incurable!

It is my own self, my own sin—which has caused these floods of sorrows to break in upon me!

Diseases, aches, sicknesses, pains

Diseases, aches, sicknesses, pains—they are all the daughters of sin, and he who is not sensible of them as the births and products of sin, does but add to his sin, and provokes the Lord to add to his sufferings. Is. 26:9-11

No man shall ever be charged by God for feeling his burden, if he neither frets nor faints under it. Grace does not destroy nature—but rather perfects it. Grace is of a noble offspring; it neither turns men into stocks nor to stoics. The more grace—the more sensible of the tokens, frowns, blows, and lashes—of a displeased Father.

Though Calvin, under his greatest pains, was never heard to mutter nor murmur—yet he was heard often to say 'How long, Lord, how long?'

A pious commander being shot in battle, when the wound was searched, and the bullet cut out, some standing by, pitying his pain, he replied, 'Though I groan, yet I bless God I do not grumble.' God allows His people to groan, though not to grumble. It is a God-provoking sin to lie stupid and senseless under the afflicting hand of God. God will heat that man's furnace of affliction sevenfold hotter, who is in the furnace but feels it not.

Every twig has a voice!

*"The voice of the Lord calls out to the city (and it is wise to fear Your name,) "**Pay attention to the rod and the One who ordained it.**"* Micah 6:9

Christians should hear the rod, and kiss the rod, and sit mute and silent under God's rod.

Christians should be mute and silent under the greatest afflictions, the saddest providences, and sharpest trials which they meet with in this world, that they may the better hear and understand **the voice of God's rod**.

As the **word** has a voice, the **Spirit** a voice, and **conscience** a voice—so **God's rod** has a voice. Afflictions are the rod of God's anger, the rod of His displeasure, and His rod of revenge.

God's rods are not mutes. They are all vocal, they are all *speaking* as well as *smiting*. **Every twig has a voice!**

'Ah! soul,' says one twig, 'you say it smarts. Well! tell me, is it good to provoke a jealous God?' Jer. 4:18.

'Ah! soul,' says another twig, 'you say it is bitter, it reaches to your heart; but have not your own doings procured these things?' Rom. 6:20-21.

'Ah! soul,' says another twig, 'where is the profit, the pleasure, the sweet that you have found in wandering from God?' Hosea 2:7.

'Ah! soul,' says another twig, 'was it not best with you, when you were high in your communion with God, and when you were humble and close in your walking with God?' Micah 6:8.

'Ah! Christian,' says another twig, 'will you search your heart, and try your ways, and turn to the Lord your God?' Lam. 3:40.

'Ah! soul,' says another twig, 'will you die to sin more than ever, and to the world more than ever, and to relations more than ever, and to yourself more than ever?' Rom. 14:6-8; Gal. 6:18.

'Ah! soul,' says another twig, 'will you live more to Christ than ever, and cleave closer to Christ than ever, and prize Christ more than ever, and venture further for Christ than ever?'

'Ah! soul,' says another twig, 'will you love Christ with a more inflamed love, and hope in Christ with a more raised hope, and depend upon Christ with a greater confidence, and wait upon Christ with more invincible patience?'

Now, if the soul is not mute and silent under the rod, how is it possible that it should ever hear the voice of God's rod, or that it should ever hearken to the voice of every twig of God's rod?

The rod that is in the hands of earthly fathers has a voice—but children hear it not, they understand it not, until they are hushed and quiet, and brought to kiss it, and sit silently under it. No more shall we hear or understand the voice of the rod that is in our heavenly Father's hand, until we come to kiss it, and sit silently under it.

Living by faith

"We live by faith, not by sight." 2 Corinthians 5:7

Living by faith brings the soul to sit down satisfied in the naked enjoyments of God.

Living by faith dries up the springs of . . .
  pride,
  self-love,
  impatience,
  murmuring,
  unbelief, and
  the carnal delights of this world.

Living by faith presents to the soul greater, sweeter, and better things in Christ—than anything this world can afford.

Living by faith lessens the soul's esteem of all outward vanities.

All your former troubles and afflictions

"In the day of adversity, consider." Eccles. 7:14

If you would be quiet and silent under your present troubles and trials, then dwell much upon the benefit, the profit, the advantage that has redounded to your souls by **all your former troubles and afflictions**.

Oh! consider, how by former afflictions the Lord has revealed sin, prevented sin, and mortified sin!

Consider how the Lord by former afflictions has revealed to you the impotency, the mutability, the insufficiency, and the vanity of the world, and all worldly concerns!

Consider how the Lord by former afflictions has melted your heart, and broken your heart, and humbled your heart, and prepared your heart for clearer, fuller, and sweeter enjoyments of Himself!

Consider what pity, what compassion, what affections, what tenderness, and what sweetness former afflictions have wrought in you, towards others in misery!

Consider what room former afflictions have made in your soul for God, for His word, for good counsel, and for divine comfort!

Consider how by former afflictions the Lord has made you more partaker of His Christ, His Spirit, His holiness, His goodness, etc.

Consider how by former afflictions the Lord has made you to look towards heaven more, to mind heaven more, to prize heaven more, and to long for heaven more, etc.

Now, who can seriously consider all the good that he has gotten by former afflictions—and not be silent under present afflictions? Who can remember those choice, those great, and those precious profits that his soul has made of former afflictions, and not reason himself into a holy silence under present afflictions thusly, "O my soul! has not God done you much good, great good, special good—by former afflictions? Yes! O my soul! has not God done that for you by former afflictions—which you would not undo for ten thousand worlds? Yes! And is not God, O my soul! as powerful as ever, as faithful as ever, as gracious as ever, and as ready and willing as ever—to do you good by present afflictions, as he has been to do you good by former afflictions? Yes! Yes! Why, why then do you not sit silent and mute before Him, under your present troubles, O my soul?"

A fool to his schoolmaster

He who goes to school to his own carnal reason, has **a fool to his schoolmaster**; and he who allows his faith to be overruled by his reason, shall never lack woe.

No man lives so **free** a life, so **holy** a life, so **heavenly** a life, so **happy** a life—as he who lives a life of faith. Now the soul is put upon the highest and the purest acts of faith, that is, to cleave to God, to hang upon God, and to carry it sweetly and obediently towards God, though He frowns, though He chides, though He strikes, yes, though He kills! 'For we walk by faith, and not by sight.' 2 Cor. 5:7

The sharpest dealings of God with you

"Why should any living man complain when punished for his sins?" Lamentations 3:39

To move you to silence under your sorest and your sharpest trials, consider, that you have deserved greater and heavier afflictions than those you are under.

Has God taken away one mercy? You have deserved to be stripped of all.

Has he taken away the delight of your eyes? He might have taken away the delight of your soul.

Are you under outward wants? You have deserved to be under outward and inward wants together.

Are you cast upon a sick bed?
You have deserved a bed in hell.

Are you under that ache and that pain? You have deserved to be under all aches and pains at once.

Has God chastised you with whips? You have deserved to be chastised with scorpions. 1 Kings 12:14.

Have you fallen from the highest pinnacle of honor to be the scorn and contempt of men? You have deserved to be scorned and condemned by God and angels.

Are you under a severe whipping?
You have deserved an utter damning.

Ah Christian! let but your eyes be fixed upon your demerits—and your hands will be quickly upon your mouths! Whatever is less than a final separation from God, whatever is less than hell—is mercy! Therefore you have cause to be silent under **the sharpest dealings of God with you**.

Sweet honey out of the bitterest herbs

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

Consider that all your afflictions, troubles, and trials shall work for your good. Why then should you fret, fling, fume—considering God intends you good in all? The bee sucks **sweet honey out of the bitterest herbs**; so God will by afflictions teach His children to suck sweet knowledge, sweet obedience, and sweet experiences, sweet humility—out of all the bitter afflictions and trials He exercises them with.

That **scouring** and **rubbing**, which frets others, shall make them shine the brighter; and that **weight** which keeps others crushed, shall but make them, like the palm tree, grow better and higher; and that **hammer** which knocks others all into pieces, shall but knock them the nearer to Christ, the corner stone.

Stars shine brightest in the darkest night;
torches give the best light when beaten;
grapes yield most wine when most pressed;
spices smell sweetest when pounded;
vines are the better for bleeding;
gold looks the brighter for scouring;
juniper smells sweetest in the fire;
chamomile, the more you tread it the more you spread it;
the salamander lives best in the fire;
the Jews were best, when most afflicted.

Afflictions are the saints' best benefactors to heavenly affections. Where afflictions hang heaviest—corruptions hang loosest. And grace that is hidden in nature, as sweet water in rose leaves, is then most fragrant when the fire of affliction is put under to distill it out. Grace shines the brighter for scouring, and is most glorious when it is most clouded.

Why is my pain unending?

*"**Why is my pain unending** and my wound grievous and incurable?"* Jeremiah 15:18

Though God has always reason for what He does—yet He is not bound to show us the reasons of His doings.

It is an evil and a dangerous thing to cavil at, or to question God's proceedings—who may do with His own what He pleases. He is unaccountable and uncontrollable; and therefore none has a right to question Him.

As no man may question God's right to afflict him, nor His righteousness in afflicting him; so no man may question the reasons why He afflicts him. As no man can compel God to give a reason for His doings; so no man may dare to ask Him the particular reasons of His doings.

Kings are not bound to give their subjects a reason of their doings; and shall we bind God to give us a reason of His doings, who is the King of kings and Lord of Lords, and whose will is the true and only rule of justice?

The *general grounds and reasons* which God has laid down in His word why He afflicts His people, as—that is for their profit; for the purging away of their sins; for the purifying of their lives; and for the saving of their souls—should work them to be silent and satisfied under all their afflictions; though God should never satisfy their curiosity in giving them an account of some more hidden causes which may lie secret in the abysses of His eternal knowledge and infallible will.

Ah, Christian! it is your wisdom and duty to sit silent and mute under the afflicting hand of God upon the account of revealed reasons, without making any curious inquiry into those more secret reasons which are locked up in the golden cabinet of God's own bosom! "The secret things belong to the Lord our God." Deuteronomy 29:29

He dares spit in the very face of God Himself!

Many, when they feel the rod to smart—ah, how they do fret and fume! Isaiah 8:21, 'Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land; when they are famished, they will become enraged and, looking upward, will curse their king and their God.' Prov. 19:3, 'A man's own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the Lord.' The heart may be fretful and froward when the tongue does not blaspheme. Folly brings man into misery, and misery makes man to fret. Man in misery is more apt to fret and chafe against the Lord, than to fret and chafe against his sin which has brought him into sufferings.
2 Kings 6:33, Psalm 37:1, 7-8.

A fretful soul dares fly at God himself! When Pharaoh is troubled with the frets, **he dares spit in the very face of God himself**—'Who is the Lord, that I should obey Him?' Exod. 5:2. And when Jonah is in a fretting humour, he dares tell God to his face, 'that he does well to be angry!' Jonah had done well if he had been angry with his sin—but he did very ill to be angry with his God! God will vex every vein in that man's heart, before He has done with him, who fumes and frets, because he cannot snap in sunder the cords with which he is bound, Ezek. 16:43. Sometimes good men are sick of the frets—but when they are, it costs them dear, as Job and Jonah found by experience. No man has ever got anything by his fretting and flinging, except it has been harder blows or heavier chains;

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(A Christian with an Olive Leaf in his mouth, when he is under the greatest afflictions, the sharpest and sorest trials and troubles, the saddest and darkest Providences and changes. With answers to diverse questions and objections that are of greatest importance—all tending to win and work souls to be still, quiet, calm and silent under all changes that have, or may pass upon them in this world.)

"The Lord is in his Holy Temple—let all the earth keep silence before him." Hab 2:20.

The Epistle Dedicatory—To all afflicted and distressed, dissatisfied, disturbed, and agitated Christians throughout the world.

Dear hearts—The choicest saints are 'born to troubles as the sparks fly upwards', Job 5:7. '**Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivers him out of them all.'** Psa 34:19. If they were many, and not troubles, then, as it is in the proverb, the more the merrier; or if they were troubles and not many, then the fewer the better. But God, who is infinite in wisdom and matchless in goodness, has ordered troubles, yes, many troubles to come trooping in upon us on every side. As our mercies—so our crosses seldom come single; they usually come treading one upon the heels of another; they are like April showers, no sooner is one over but another comes. And yet, Christians, it is mercy, it is rich mercy, that every affliction is not an execution, that every correction is not a damnation. The higher the waters rise, the nearer Noah's ark was lifted up to heaven; the more your afflictions are increased, the more your heart shall be raised heavenward.

Because I would not hold you too long in the porch, I shall only endeavor two things—first, to give you the reasons of my appearing once more in print; and secondly, a little counsel and direction that the following tract may turn to your soul's advantage, which is the objective that I have in my eye. The true **REASONS** of my sending this piece into the world, such as it is, are these—

First, The afflicting hand of God has been hard upon myself, and upon my dearest relations in this world, and upon many of my precious Christian friends, whom I much love and honor in the Lord, which put me upon studying of the mind of God in that scripture that I have made the subject-matter of this following discourse. Luther could not understand some Psalms until he was afflicted; the Christ-cross is no letter in the book, and yet, says he, it has taught one more than all the letters in the book. **Afflictions are a golden key by which the Lord opens the rich treasure of his word to his people's souls**; and this in some measure, through grace, my soul has experienced. When Samson had found honey, he gave some to his father and mother to eat, Jdg 14:9-10; some honey I have found in my following text; and therefore I may not, I cannot be such a churl as not to give them some of my honey to taste, who have drunk deep of my gall and wormwood.

Augustine observes on that, Psa 66:16, 'Come and hear, all you that fear God, and I will declare what he has done for my soul.' 'He does not call them', says he, 'to acquaint them with speculations, how wide the earth is, how far the heavens are stretched out, what the number of the stars is, or what is the course of the sun; but come and I will tell you the wonders of his grace, the faithfulness of his promises, the riches of his mercy to my soul'. Gracious experiences are to be communicated. 'We learn—that we may teach'—is a proverb among the Rabbis. And I do therefore 'lay in and lay up,' says the heathen, that I may draw forth again and lay out for the good of many. When God has dealt bountifully with us, others should reap some noble good by us. The family, the town, the city, the country, where a man lives, should fare the better for his faring well. Our mercies and experiences should be as a running spring at our doors, which is not only for our own use—but also for our neighbors', yes, and for strangers too.

Secondly, What is written is permanent and spreads itself further by far—for time, place, and people—than the voice can reach. The pen is an artificial tongue; it speaks as well to absent as to present friends; it speaks to those who far off as well as those who are near; it speaks to many thousands at once; it speaks not only to the present age but also to succeeding ages. The pen is a kind of image of eternity; it will make a man live when he is dead, Heb 11:1. Though 'the prophets do not live for ever', yet their labors may, Zec 1:6. A man's writings may preach when he **can** not, when he **may** not, and when by reason of bodily distempers, he **dares** not; yes, and that which is more, when he **is** not.

Thirdly, Few men, if any, have iron memories. How soon is a sermon *preached* forgotten, when a sermon *written* remains! Augustine writing to Volusian, says, 'That which is written is always at hand to be read, when the reader is at leisure.' Men do not easily forget their own names, nor their father's house, nor the wife of their bosom, nor the fruit of their loins, nor to eat their daily bread; and yet, ah! how easily do they forget that word of grace, that should be dearer to them than all! Most men's memories, especially in the great concernments of their souls, are like a sieve, where the good grain and fine flour goes through—but the light chaff and coarse bran remain behind; or like a strainer, where the sweet liquor is strained out—but the dregs left behind; or like a grate that lets the pure water run away—but if there be any straws, sticks, mud, or filth, that it holds, as it were, with iron hands. Most men's memories are very treacherous, especially in good things; few men's memories are a holy ark, a heavenly storehouse for their souls, and therefore they stand in the more need. But,

Fourthly, Its marvelous suitableness and usefulness under these great turns and changes that have passed upon us. As every wise husbandman observes the fittest seasons to sow his seed—some he sows in the autumn and some in the spring of the year, some in a dry season and some in a wet, some in a moist clay and some in a sandy dry ground, Isa 28:25; so every spiritual husbandman must observe the fittest times to sow his spiritual seed in. He has heavenly seed by him for all occasions and seasons, for spring and fall; for all grounds, heads, and hearts. Now whether the seed sown in the following treatise be not suitable to the times and seasons wherein we are cast, is left to the judgment of the prudent reader to determine; if the author had thought otherwise, this babe had been stifled in the womb.

Fifthly, The good acceptance that my other weak labors have found. God has blessed them—not only to the conviction, the edification, confirmation, and consolation of many—but also to the conversion of many, Rom 15:21. God is a free agent to work by what hand he pleases; and sometimes he takes pleasure to do great things by weak means, that 'no flesh may glory in his presence.' God will not 'despise the day of small things;' and who or what are you, that dare despise that day? The Spirit breathes upon whose preaching and writing he pleases, and all prospers according as that wind blows, Joh 3:8.

Sixthly, That all afflicted and distressed Christians may have a proper salve for every sore, a proper remedy against every disease, at hand. As every good man, so every good book is not fit to be the afflicted man's companion; but this is. Here he may see his face, his head, his hand, his heart, his ways, his works; here he may see all his diseases discovered, and proper remedies proposed and applied. Here he may find arguments to silence him, and means to quiet him, when it is at worst with him. In every **storm** here he may find a tree to shelter him; and in every **danger**, here he may find a city of refuge to secure him; and in every **difficulty**, here he may have a light to guide him; and in every **peril**, here he may find a shield to defend him; and in every **distress**, here he may find a cordial to strengthen him; and in every **trouble**, here he may find a staff to support him.

Seventhly, To satisfy some bosom friends, some faithful friends. Man is made to be a friend, and apt for friendly offices. He who is not friendly is not worthy to have a friend; and he who has a friend, and does not show himself friendly, is not worthy to be accounted a man. Friendship is a kind of life, without which there is no comfort of a man's life. Christian friendship ties such a knot that great Alexander cannot cut. Summer friends I value not—but winter friends are worth their weight in gold; and who can deny such anything, especially in these days, wherein real, faithful, constant friends are so rare to be found? 1Sa 22:1-3.

The friendship of most men in these days is like Jonah's gourd, now very promising and flourishing, and anon fading and withering; it is like some plants in the water, which have broad leaves on the surface of the water—but scarce any root at all; their friendship is like melons, cold within, hot without; their expressions are high—but their affections are low; they speak much—but do little. As drums, and trumpets, and flags in a battle make a great noise and a fine show—but do nothing; so these friends will compliment highly and handsomely, speak plausibly, and promise lustily, and yet have neither a hand nor heart to do anything cordially or faithfully. From such friends it is a mercy to be delivered, and therefore king Antigonus was used to pray to God that he would protect him from his friends; and when one of his council asked him why he prayed so, he returned this answer, Every man will shun and defend himself against his professed enemies—but from our professed or pretended friends, of whom few are faithful, none can safe-guard himself—but has need of protection from heaven.

But for all this, there are some that are real friends, faithful friends, active friends, winter friends, bosom friends, fast friends; and for their sakes, especially those among them that have been long, very long, under the smarting rod, and in the fiery furnace, and that have been often poured from vessel to vessel—have I once more appeared in print to the world.

Eighthly and lastly, There are not any authors or author come to my hand, who have handled this subject as I have done; and therefore I do not know but it may be the more grateful and acceptable to the world; and if by this essay others that are more able shall be provoked to do more worthily upon this subject, I shall therein rejoice, 1Th 1:7-8, 1Co 9:1-2. I shall only add, that though much of the following matter was preached upon the Lord's chastening visitations of my dear yoke-fellow, myself, and some other friends—yet there are many things of special concernment in the following tract, that yet I have not upon any accounts communicated to the world. And thus I have given you a true and faithful account of the reasons that have prevailed with me to publish this treatise to the work, and to dedicate it to yourselves.

II. Secondly, The second thing promised was, the giving of you a little **GOOD COUNSEL**, that you may so read the following discourse, as that it may turn much to your soul's advantage; for, as many fish and catch nothing, Luk 5:5, so many read good books and get nothing, because they read them over cursorily, slightly, superficially; but he who would read to profit, must then, First, Read and **look up for a blessing**—'Paul may plant, and Apollos may water,' but all will be to no purpose, except 'the Lord gives the increase,' 1Co 3:6-7. God must do the deed, when all is done, or else all that is done will do you no good. If you would have this work successful and effectual, you must look off from man—and look up to God, who alone can make it a blessing to you. As without a blessing from heaven, your clothes cannot warm you, nor your food nourish you, nor medicine cure you, nor friends comfort you, Mic 6:14; so without a blessing from heaven, without the precious breathings and influences of the Spirit, what here is written will do you no good, it will not turn to your account in the day of Christ; therefore cast an eye heavenwards, Hag 1:6.

It is Seneca's observation, that the husbandmen in Egypt never look up to heaven for rain in the time of drought—but look after the overflowing of the banks of Nile, as the only cause of their plenty. Ah, how many are there in these days, who, when they go to read a book, never look up, never look after the rain of God's blessing—but only look to the river Nile; they only look to the wit, the learning, the arts, the parts, the eloquence, etc., of the author, they never look so high as heaven; and hence it comes to pass, that though these read much, yet they profit little.

Secondly, He who would read to profit must read and **meditate**. Meditation is the food of your souls, it is the very stomach and natural heat whereby spiritual truths are digested. A man shall as soon live without his heart, as he shall be able to get good by what he reads, without meditation. Prayer, says Bernard, without meditation, is dry and formal; and reading without meditation is useless and unprofitable. He who would be a wise, a prudent, and an able experienced statesman, must not hastily ramble and run over many cities, countries, customs, laws, and manners of people, without serious musing and pondering upon such things as may make him an expert statesman; so he who would get good by reading, that would complete his knowledge, and perfect his experience in spiritual things, must not slightly and hastily ramble and run over this book or that—but ponder upon what he reads, as Mary pondered the saying of the angel in her heart.

Lord! says Augustine, the more I meditate on you, the sweeter you are to me; so the more you shall meditate on the following matter, the sweeter it will be to you. They usually thrive best who meditate most. Meditation is a soul-fattening duty; it is a grace-strengthening duty, it is a duty-crowning duty. Meditation is the nurse of prayer. Jerome calls it his paradise; Basil calls it the treasury where all the graces are locked up; Theophylact calls it the very gate and portal by which we enter into glory; and Aristotle, though a heathen, places felicity in the contemplation of the mind. You may read much and hear much—yet without meditation you will never be excellent, you still never be eminent Christians.

Thirdly, Read, and **test** what you read; take nothing upon trust—but all upon trial, as those 'noble Bereans' did, Acts 17: to, 11. You will try and count and weigh gold, though it be handed to you by your fathers; and so should you all those heavenly truths that are handed to you by your spiritual fathers. I hope upon trial you will find nothing—but what will hold weight in the balance of the sanctuary; and though all be not gold that glitters, yet I judge that you will find nothing here to blister, that will not be found upon trial to be true gold.

Fourthly, Read and **do**, read and **practice** what you read, or else all your reading will do you no good. He who has a good book in his hand—but not a lesson of it in his heart or life, is like that donkey that carries burdens, and feeds upon thistles. In divine account, a man knows no more than be does. Profession without practice will but make a man twice told a child of darkness. To *speak* well is to sound like a cymbal—but to *do* well is to act like an angel [Isidore]. He who practices what he reads and understands, God will help him to understand what he understands not. There is no fear of knowing too much, though there is much fear in practicing too little; the most doing man, shall be the most knowing man; the mightiest man in practice, will in the end prove the mightiest man in Scripture, Joh 7:16-17, Psa 119:98-100. Theory is the guide of practice, and practice is the life of theory.

Salvian relates how the heathen did reproach some Christians, who by their lewd lives made the gospel of Christ to be a reproach. 'Where,' said they, 'is that good law which they believe? Where are those rules of godliness which they learn? They read the holy gospel, and yet are unclean; they read the apostles' writings, and yet live in drunkenness; they follow Christ, and yet disobey Christ; they profess a holy law, and yet lead impure lives.' Ah! how may many preachers take up sad complaints against many readers in these days! They read our works, and yet in their lives they deny our works; they praise our works, and yet in their lives they reproach our works; they cry up our labors in their discourses, and yet they cry them down in their practices—yet I hope better things of you into whose hands this treatise shall fall. The Samaritan woman did not fill her pitcher with water, that she might talk of it—but that she might use it, Joh 4:7; and Rachel did not desire the mandrakes to hold in her hand—but that she might thereby be the more apt to bring forth, Gen 30:15. The application is easy. But,

Fifthly, Read and **apply**. Reading is but the drawing of the bow, application is the hitting of the bulls-eye. The choicest truths will no further profit you than they are applied by you. It would be as good not to read, as not to apply what you read. No man attains to health by reading books on health—but by the practical application of their remedies. All the reading in the world will never make for the health of your souls—except you apply what you read. The true reason why many read so much and profit so little—is because they do not apply and bring home what they read to their own souls. But,

Sixthly, and lastly, Read and **pray**. He who makes not conscience of praying over what he reads, will find little sweetness or profit in his reading. No man makes such earnings of his reading, as he who prays over what he reads. Luther professes that he profited more in the knowledge of the Scriptures by prayer, in a short space, than by study in a longer. As John by weeping got the sealed book open, so certainly men would gain much more than they do by reading good men's works, if they would but pray more over what they read! Ah, Christians! pray before you read, and pray after you read, that all may be blessed and sanctified to you; when you have done reading, usually close up thus—So let me live, so let me die, that I may live eternally.

And when you are in the mount for yourselves, bear him upon your hearts, who is willing to 'spend and be spend' for your sakes, for your souls, 2Co 12:15. Oh! pray for me, that I may more and more be under the rich influences and glorious pourings out of the Spirit; that I may 'be an able minister of the New Testament—not of the letter—but of the Spirit,' 2Co 3:6; that I may always find an everlasting spring and an overflowing fountain within me, which may always make me faithful, constant, and abundant in the work of the Lord; and that I may live daily under those inward teachings of the Spirit, which may enable me to speak from the heart to the heart, from the conscience to the conscience, and from experience to experience; that I may be a 'burning and a shining light,' that everlasting arms may be still under me; that while I live, I may be serviceable to his glory and his people's good; that no discouragements may discourage one in my work; and that when my work is done, I may give up my account with joy and not with grief. I shall follow these poor labors with my weak prayers, that they may contribute much to your internal and eternal welfare.

Your soul's servant in our dearest Lord,
Thomas Brooks.

THE MUTE CHRISTIAN UNDER THE SMARTING ROD

"I was silent; I would not open my mouth, for You are the one who has done this!" Psa 39:9

Not to trouble you with a tedious **preface**, wherein usually is a flood of words, and but a drop of matter,

This Psalm consists of two parts. Narration and prayer take up the whole. In the former, you have the prophet's disease discovered; and in the latter, the remedy applied. My text falls in the latter part, where you have the way of David's cure, or the means by which his soul was reduced to a still and quiet temper. I shall give a little light into the words, and then come to the point that I intend to stand upon.

'I was silent.' The Hebrew word signifies to be mute, tongue-tied, or dumb. The Hebrew word signifies also to bind, as well as to be mute and dumb, because those who are dumb are as it were tongue-tied; they have their lips stitched and bound up. Ah! the sight of God's hand in the afflictions which were upon him, makes him lay a law of silence upon his heart and tongue.

'I would not open my mouth, for You are the one who has done this!' He looks through all secondary causes to the first cause, and is silent—he sees a hand of God in all, and so sits mute and quiet. The sight of God in an affliction is of an irresistible efficacy to silence the heart, and to stop the mouth of a godly man. In the words you may observe three things:

1. The person speaking, and that is, David; David a king, David a saint, David 'a man after God's own heart,' David a Christian; and here we are to look upon David—not as a king—but as a Christian, as a man whose heart was right with God.

2. The action and carriage of David under the hand of God, in these words, 'I was silent; I would not open my mouth.'

3. The reason of this humble and sweet carriage of his, in these words, 'for You are the one who has done this!' The proposition is this:

Doctrine: That it is the great duty and concern of gracious souls to be mute and silent under the greatest afflictions, the saddest providences, and sharpest trials which they meet with in this world.

For the opening and clearing up of this great and useful truth, I shall inquire,

First, What this silence is that is here pointed at in the proposition.

Secondly, What a gracious, a holy, silence does include.

Thirdly, What this holy silence does not include.

Fourthly, The reasons of the point; and then bring home all by way of application to our own souls.

I. What is the silence meant, here in this verse?

I answer, **There is a sevenfold silence.**

First, There is a **STOICAL** silence. The stoics of old thought it altogether below a man that has reason or understanding either to rejoice in any good, or to mourn for any evil; but this stoical silence is such a sinful insensibleness as is very provoking to a holy God, Isa 26:10-11. God will make the most insensible sinner sensible either of his hand here on earth—or of his wrath in hell. It is a heathenish and a horrid sin to be without natural affections, Rom 1:31. And of this sin Quintus Maximus seems to be foully guilty who, when he heard that his mother and wife, whom he dearly loved, were slain by the fall of an house, and that his younger son, a brave, hopeful young man, died at the same time in Umbria, he never changed his countenance—but went on with the affairs of the commonwealth as if no such calamity had befallen him. This carriage of his spoke out more stupidity than patience, Job 25:13.

And so Harpalus was not at all appalled when he saw two of his sons laid in a coffin, when Astyages had bid him to supper. This was a sottish insensibleness. Certainly if the loss of a child in the house be no more to you than the loss of a chick in the yard—your heart is base and sordid, and you may well expect some sore awakening judgment. This age is full of such monsters, who think it below the greatness and magnanimity of their spirits to be moved, affected, or afflicted with any afflictions which befall them. I know none so ripe and ready for hell as these.

Aristotle speaks of fish, that though they have spears thrust into their sides, yet they awake not. God thrusts many a sharp spear through many a sinner's heart, and yet he feels nothing, he complains of nothing. These men's souls will bleed to death. Seneca reports of Senecio Cornelius, who minded his body more than his soul, and his money more than heaven; when he had all the day long waited on his dying friend, and his friend was dead, he returns to his house, sups merrily, comforts himself quickly, goes to bed cheerfully. His sorrows were ended, and the time of his mourning expired before his deceased friend was interred. Such stupidity is a curse that many a man lies under. But this stoical silence, which is but a sinful sullenness, is not the silence here meant.

Secondly, There is a **POLITIC** silence. Many are silent out of policy. Should they not be silent, they should lay themselves more open either to the rage and fury of men, or else to the plots and designs of men—to prevent which they are silent, and will lay their hands upon their mouths, that others might not lay their hands upon their estates, lives, or liberties—'And Saul also went home to Gibeah, and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched. But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? and they despised him, and brought him no presents; but he held his peace,' or was as though he had been deaf, 1Sa 10:26-27. This new king being but newly entered upon his kingly government, and observing his condition to be but base and low, his friends but few, and his enemies many and potent, sons of Belial, that is, men without yoke, as the word signifies, men that were desperately wicked, that were marked out for hell, that were even incarnate devils, who would neither submit to reason nor religion, nor be governed by the laws of nature nor of nations, nor yet by the laws of God—now this young prince, to prevent sedition and rebellion, blood and destruction, prudently and politically chooses rather to lay his hand upon his mouth than to take a wolf by the ear or a lion by the beard—he turns a deaf ear to all they say, his unsettled condition requiring silence.

Saul knew this was a time for silence; he knew his work was rather to be an auditor than an orator. But this is not the silence the proposition speaks of.

Thirdly, There it's a **FOOLISH** silence. Some fools there be that can neither do well nor speak well; and because they cannot word it neither as they would nor as they should, they are so wise as to be mute—Pro 17:28, 'Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue.' As he cannot be wise that speaks much, so he cannot be known for a fool that says nothing. There are many wise fools in the world, who, by holding their tongues, gain the credit and honor of being discreet men. He who does not uncover his lack of wisdom by foolish babbling, is accounted wise, though be may be otherwise. Silence is so rare a virtue, where wisdom does regulate it, that it is accounted a virtue where folly does impose it. Silence was so highly honored among the old Romans, that they erected altars to it. That man shall pass for a man of understanding, who so far understands himself as to hold his tongue. For though it be a great misery to be a fool, yet it is a greater that a man cannot be a fool but he must needs show it. But this foolish silence is not the silence here meant.

Fourthly, There is a **SULLEN** silence. Many, to gratify an humour, a lust, are sullenly silent; these are troubled with a dumb devil, which was the worst devil of all the devils you read of in the Scripture, Mar 9:17-28. Pliny, in his Natural History, makes mention of a certain people in the Indies, upon the river Ganges, called Astomy, that have no mouth—but do only feed upon the smell of herbs and flowers. Certainly there is a generation among us, who, when they are under the afflicting hand of God, have no mouths to plead with God, no lips to praise God, nor no tongues to justify God. These are possessed with a dumb devil; and this dumb devil had possessed Ahab for a time—1Ki 21:4, 'And Ahab came into his house, heavy and displeased, and laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.' Ahab's ambitious humour, his covetous humour, being crossed, he is resolved to starve himself, and to die of the sullens. A sullen silence is both a sin and a punishment. No devil frets and vexes, wears and wastes the spirits of a man, like this dumb devil—like this sullen silence.

Some write of a certain devil, whom they call Hudgin, who will not, they say, hurt anybody, except he be wronged. I cannot speak so favorably of a sullen silence, for that wrongs many at once, God and Christ, bodies and soul. But this is not the silence here meant.

Fifthly, There is a **FORCED** silence. Many are silent per force. He who is under the power of his enemy, though he suffers many hard things, yet he is silent under his sufferings, because he knows he is liable to worse; he who has taken away his liberty, may take away his life; he who has taken away his money, may take off his head; he who has cut him in the foot, may cut him in the throat if he will not be still and quiet—and this works silence per force. So, when many are under the afflicting hand of God, conscience tells them that now they are under the hand of an enemy, and the power of that God whom they have dishonored, whose Son they have crucified, whose Spirit they have grieved, whose righteous laws they have transgressed, whose ordinances they have despised, and whose people they have abused and opposed; and that he who has taken away one child, may take away every child; and he who has taken away the wife, might have taken away the husband; and he who has taken away some part of the estate, might have taken away all the estate; and that he who has inflicted some distempers upon the body, might have cast both body and soul into hell-fire forever; and he who has shut him up in his chamber, may shut him out of heaven at pleasure. The thoughts and sense of these things makes many a sinner silent under the hand of God; but this is but a forced silence!

And such was the silence of Philip the Second, king of Spain, who, when his invincible Armada, that had been three years a-fitting, was lost, he gave command that all over Spain they should give thanks to God, that it was no more grievous. As the cudgel forces the dog to be quiet and still, and the rod forces the child to be silent and mute, so the apprehensions of what God has done, and of what God may do, forces many a soul to be silent, Jer 3:10, 1Ki 14:5-18. But this is not the silence here meant—a forced silence is no silence in the eye of God.

Sixthly, There is a **DESPAIRING** silence. A despairing soul is a terror to himself; he has a hell in his heart, and horror in his conscience. He looks upwards, and there he beholds God frowning; he looks inwards, and there he finds conscience accusing and condemning of him; he looks on the one side of him, and there he hears all his sins crying out—We are yours, and we will follow you; we will go to the grave with you, we will go to judgment with you, and from judgment we will go to hell with you; he looks on the other side of him, and there he sees infernal fiends in fearful shapes, amazing and terrifying of him, and waiting to receive his despairing soul as soon as she shall take her leave of his wretched body; he looks above him, and there he sees the gates of heaven shut against him; he looks beneath him, and there he sees hell gaping for him; and under these sad sights, he is full of secret conclusions against his own soul. There is mercy for others, says the despairing soul—but none for me; grace and favor for others—but none for me; pardon and peace for others—but none for me; blessedness and happiness for others—but none for me—there is no help, there is no help, none! Jer 2:25, Jer 18:12.

This seems to be his case who died with this desperate saying in his mouth—farewell, life and hope together. Now, under these dismal apprehensions and sad conclusions about its present and future condition, the despairing soul sits silent, being filled with amazement and astonishment—Psa 77:1, 'I am so troubled that I cannot speak.' But this is not the silence here meant. But,

Seventhly and lastly, There is a **PRUDENT** silence, a **HOLY**, a **GRACIOUS** silence; a silence that springs from prudent principles, from holy principles, and from gracious causes and considerations; and this is the silence here meant. And this I shall fully discover in my answers to the second question, which is this:

II. What does a prudent, a gracious, a holy silence include?

Answer. It includes and takes in these eight things:

First, **It includes a sight of God, and an acknowledgment of God as the author of all the afflictions which come upon us.** And this you have plain in the text—'I was silent; I would not open my mouth, for You are the one who has done this!' The psalmist looks through secondary causes to the first cause, and so sits mute before the Lord. There is no sickness so little—but God has a finger in it; though it be but the aching of the little finger. As the scribe is more eyed and properly said to write, than the pen; and he who makes and keeps the clock, is more properly said to make it go and strike, than the wheels and weights that hang upon it; and as every workman is more eyed and properly said to erect his works, rather than the tools which he uses as his instruments. So the Lord, who is the chief agent and mover in all actions, and who has the greatest hand in all our afflictions, is more to be eyed and owned than any inferior or subordinate causes whatever.

So **Job**, he beheld God in all—Job 1:21, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away.' Had he not seen God in the affliction, he would have cried out—Oh these wretched Chaldeans, they have plundered and spoiled me; these wicked Sabeans, they have robbed and wronged me! Job discerns God's commission in the Chaldeans' and the Sabeans' hands, and then lays his own hand upon his mouth. So **Aaron**, beholding the hand of God in the untimely death of his two sons, holds his peace, Lev 10:3. The sight of God in this sad stroke is a bridle both to his mind and mouth, he neither mutters nor murmurs. So **Joseph** saw the hand of God in his brethren's selling of him into Egypt, Gen 14:8, and that silences him.

Men who don't see God in an affliction, are easily cast into a feverish fit, they will quickly be in a flame, and when their passions are up, and their hearts on fire, they will begin to be saucy, and make no bones of telling God to his teeth, that they do well to be angry, Jon 4:8-9. Such as will not acknowledge God to be the author of all their afflictions, will be ready enough to fall in with that mad principle of the Manichees, who maintained the devil to be the author of all calamities; as if there could be any evil of affliction in the city, and the Lord have no hand in it, Amo 3:6. **Such as can see the ordering hand of God in all their afflictions, will, with David, lay their hands upon their mouths, when the rod of God is upon their backs**, 2Sa 16:11-12. **If God's hand be not seen in the affliction, the heart will do nothing but fret and rage under affliction.**

Secondly, **It includes and takes in some holy, gracious apprehensions of the majesty, sovereignty, authority, and presence of that God under whose acting hand we are**—Hab 2:20, 'But the Lord is in his holy temple—let all the earth be silent', or as the Hebrew reads it, 'Be silent, all the earth, before his face.' When God would have all the people of the earth to be hushed, quiet, and silent before him, he would have them to behold him in his temple, where he sits in state, in majesty, and glory—Zeph. 1, 'Hold your peace at the presence of the Lord God.' Chat not, murmur not, repine not, quarrel not; stand mute, be silent, lay your hand on your mouth, when his hand is upon your back, who is all eye to see, as well as all hand to punish. As the eyes of a well-drawn picture are fastened on you which way soever you turn, so are the eyes of the Lord; and therefore you have cause to stand mute before him.

Thus Aaron had an eye to the sovereignty of God, and that silences him. And Job had an eye upon the majesty of God, and that stills him. And Eli had an eye upon the authority and presence of God, and that quiets him. A man never comes to humble himself, nor to be silent under the hand of God, until he comes to see the hand of God to be a mighty hand—1Pe 5:6, 'Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God.' When men look upon the hand of God as a weak hand, a feeble hand, a low hand, a mean hand—their hearts rise against his hand. ' Who is the Lord,' says Pharaoh, 'that I should obey his voice?' Exo 5:2. And until Pharaoh came to **see** the hand of God, as a mighty hand, and to **feel** it as a mighty hand, he would not let Israel go.

When Tiribazus, a noble Persian, was arrested, at first he drew out his sword and defended himself; but when they charged him in the king's name, and informed him that they came from the king, and were commanded to bring him to the king, he yielded willingly. So when afflictions arrest us, we shall murmur and grumble, and struggle, and strive even to the death, before we shall yield to that God that strikes, until we come to see his majesty and authority, until we come to see him as the king of kings, and Lord of lords, Isa 26:11-12. It is such a sight of God as this, that makes the heart to stoop under his almighty hand, Rev 1:5. The Thracians being ignorant of the dignity and majesty of God; when it thundered and lightened, used to express their madness and folly in shooting their arrows against heaven! As a sight of his grace cheers the soul, so a sight of his greatness and glory silences the soul. But,

Thirdly, **A gracious, a prudent silence, takes in a holy quietness and calmness of mind and spirit, under the afflicting hand of God.** A gracious silence shuts out all inward heats, murmurings, frettings, quarrelings, wranglings, and boilings of heart—Psa 62:1, 'Truly my soul keeps silence unto God, or is silent or still;' that is, my soul is quiet and submissive to God; all murmurings and repinings, passions and turbulent affections, being allayed, tamed, and subdued. This also is clear in the text; and in the former instances of Aaron, Eli, and Job. They **saw that it was a Father that put those bitter cups in their hands, and love that laid those heavy crosses upon their shoulders, and grace that put those yokes about their necks; and this caused much quietness and calmness in their spirits.**

Marius bit in his pain when the surgeon cut off his leg. Some men, when God cuts off this mercy and that mercy from them, they bite in their pain—they hide and conceal their grief and trouble; but could you but look into their hearts, you will find all in an uproar, all out of order, all in a flame; and however they may seem to be cold without, yet they are all in a hot burning fever within. Such a feverish fit David was once in, Psa 39:3. But certainly a holy silence allays all tumults in the mind, and makes a man 'in patience to possess his own soul,' which, next to his possession of God, is the choicest and sweetest possession in all the world, Luk 21:19.

The law of silence is as well upon that man's heart and mind as it is upon his tongue, who is truly and divinely silent under the rebuking hand of God. As tongue-service abstracted from heart-service, is no service in the account of God; so tongue-silence abstracted from heart-silence, is no silence in the esteem of God. A man is then graciously silent when all is quiet within and without, Isa 29:13, Mat 15:8-9.

Terpander, a harpist and a poet, was one that, by the sweetness of his verse and music, could allay the tumultuous motions of men's minds, as David by his harp did Saul's. When God's people are under the rod, he makes by his Spirit and word such sweet music in their souls as allays all tumultuous motions, passions, and perturbations, Psa 94:17-19, Psa 119:49-50, so that they sit, Noah-like, quiet and still; and in peace possess their own souls.

Fourthly, **A prudent, a holy silence, takes in an humble, justifying, clearing and acquitting of God of all blame, rigor and injustice, in all the afflictions he brings upon us**; Psa 51:4, 'That you may be justified when you speak, and be clear when you judge,' that is, when you correct. God's judging his people is God's correcting or chastening of his people—1Co 11:32, 'When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord.' David's great care, when he was under the afflicting hand of God, was to clear the Lord of injustice. 'Ah! Lord, says he, there is not the least show, spot, stain, blemish, or mixture of injustice, in all the afflictions you have brought upon me; I desire to take shame to myself, and to set to my seal, that the Lord is righteous, and that there is no injustice, no cruelty, nor no extremity in all that the Lord has brought upon me.' And so in that Psa 119:75, Psa 119:137, he sweetly and readily subscribes unto the righteousness of God in those sharp and smart afflictions which God exercised him with. 'I know, O Lord, that your judgments are right, and that you in faithfulness have afflicted me. Righteous are you, O Lord, and righteous are your judgments.'

God's afflictions are always just; he never afflicts but in faithfulness. His will is the rule of justice; and therefore a gracious soul dares not cavil nor question his proceedings. The afflicted soul knows that a righteous God can do nothing but that which is righteous; it knows that God is uncontrollable, and therefore the afflicted man puts his mouth in the dust, and keeps silence before him. Who dare say, 'Why have You done so?' 2Sa 16:10.

The Turks, when they are cruelly lashed, are compelled to return to the judge who commanded it, to kiss his hand, give him thanks, and pay the officer who whipped them—and so clear the judge and officer of injustice. Silently to kiss the rod, and the hand that whips with it—is the noblest way of clearing the Lord of all injustice.

The Babylonish captivity was the sorest, the heaviest affliction that ever God inflicted upon any people under heaven; witness that 1 Sam. 12: and Dan 9:12, etc. Yet under those great afflictions, wisdom is justified of her children—Neh 9:33, 'You are just in all that is brought upon us, for you have done right—but we have done wickedly!' Lam 1:18, 'The Lord is righteous, for I have rebelled against him.' A holy silence shines in nothing more than in an humble justifying and clearing of God from all that which a corrupt heart is apt enough to charge God with, in the day of affliction. God, in that he is good, can give nothing, nor do nothing—but that which is good. "Others do evil frequently; God can never do evil," says Luther.

Fifthly, **A holy silence takes in gracious, blessed, soul-quieting conclusions about the outcome of those afflictions which are upon us.** "It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young. Let him sit alone in silence, for the Lord has laid it on him. Let him bury his face in the dust—there may yet be hope. Let him offer his cheek to one who would strike him, and let him be filled with disgrace. For men are not cast off by the Lord forever. Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love. For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men." Lam 3:27-33. In this choice scripture you may observe these **FIVE SOUL-STILLING CONCLUSIONS**.

(1.) First, and that more generally, That **affliction shall work for their good** ver. 27, 'It is **good** for a man to bear the yoke while he is young.' A gracious soul secretly concludes—as stars shine brightest in the night, so God will make my soul shine and glisten like gold, while I am in this furnace, and when I come out of the furnace of affliction—Job 23:10, 'He knows the way that I take; and when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold!' 'It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees.' Psa 119:71.

Surely, as the tasting of honey did open Jonathan's eyes, so this cross, this affliction, shall open my eyes. **By this stroke I shall come to have a clearer sight of my sins and of myself, and a fuller sight of my God**, Job 33:27-28; Job 40:4-5; Job 13:1-7.

Surely this affliction shall proceed in the purging away of my dross, Isa 1:25.

Surely as ploughing of the ground kills the weeds, and harrowing breaks hard clods; **so these afflictions shall kill my sins, and soften my heart**, Hos 5:15, Hos 6:1-3.

Surely as the plaster draws out the infectious core; **so the afflictions which are upon me shall draw out the core of pride, the core of self-love, the core of envy, the core of earthliness, the core of formality, the core of hypocrisy**, Psa 119:67, Psa 119:71.

Surely by these afflictions, **the Lord will crucify my heart more and more to the world, and the world to my heart**, Gal 6:14; Psa 131:1-3.

Surely by these afflictions, **the Lord will keep pride from my soul**, Job 33:14-21.

Surely these afflictions are but the Lord's pruning-knives, by which he will bleed my sins, and prune my heart, and make it more fertile and fruitful; they are but the Lord's portion, by which he will clear me, and rid me of those spiritual diseases and maladies, which are most deadly and dangerous to my soul!

Affliction is such a potion, as will carry away all soul-diseases, better than all other remedies, Zec 13:8-9.

Surely these shall increase my spiritual experiences, Rom 5:3-4.

Surely by these I shall be made more partaker of God's holiness, Heb 12:10. As black soap makes white clothes, so does sharp afflictions make holy hearts.

Surely by these God will communicate more of himself unto me, Hos 2:14.

Surely by these afflictions, **the Lord will draw out my heart more and more to seek him**, Isa 36:16. Tatianus told the heathen Greeks, that when they were sick, then they would send for their gods to be with them, as Aganmemnon did at the siege of Troy, send for his ten counselors. Hos 5:15, 'In their afflictions they will seek me early,' or as the Hebrew has it, 'they will morning me;' in times of affliction, Christians will industriously, speedily, early seek unto the Lord.

Surely by these trials and troubles, the Lord will fix my soul more than ever upon the great concernments of the eternal world, Joh 14:1-3; Rom 8:17, 18; 2Co 4:16-18.

Surely by **these afflictions the Lord will work in me more tenderness and compassion towards those who are afflicted**, Heb 10:34, Heb 13:3. The Romans punished one that was seen looking out at his window with a crown of roses on his head, in a time of public calamity.

Surely these **afflictions are but God's love-tokens**. Rev 3:19, 'As many as I love—I rebuke and chasten.' Seneca persuaded his friend Polybius to bear his affliction quietly, because he was the emperor's favorite, telling him, that it was not lawful for him to complain while Caesar was his friend. So says the holy Christian—'O my soul! be quiet, be still; all is sent in love, all is a fruit of divine favor. I see honey upon the top of every twig, I see the rod is but a rosemary branch, I have sugar with my gall, and wine with my wormwood; therefore be silent, O my soul!' And this general conclusion, that all should be for good, had this blessed eject upon the church—Lam 3:28, 'He sits alone, and keeps silence, because he has borne it upon him.'

Afflictions abase the carnal attractions of the world, which might entice us. Affliction abates the lustiness of the flesh within, which might else ensnare us! And it abates the spirit in its quarrel against the flesh and the world; by all which it proves a mighty advantage unto us.

(2.) Secondly, **Afflictions shall keep them humble and low**—Lam 3:29, 'He puts his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope.' Some say, that these words are an allusion to the manner of those that, having been conquered and subdued, lay their necks down at the conqueror's feet to be trampled upon, and so lick up the dust that is under the conqueror's feet. Others looked upon the words as an allusion to poor petitioners, who cast themselves down at princes' feet, that they may draw forth their pity and compassion towards them. As I have read of Aristippus, who fell on the ground before Dionysius, and kissed his feet, when he presented a petition to him; and being asked the reason, answered—he has his ears in his feet. Take it which way you will, it holds forth this to us, That holy hearts will be humble under the afflicting hand of God. When God's rod is upon their backs, their mouths shall be in the dust. A good heart will lie lowest, when the hand of God is lifted highest, Job 13:1-7; Act 9:1-8.

(3.) Thirdly, The third soul-quieting conclusion you have in Lam 3:31, 'For the Lord will not cast off forever;' **the rod shall not always lie upon the back of the righteous**. 'In the evening—sudden terror! Before morning—it is gone!' Isa 17:13. As Athanasius said to his friends, when they came to bewail his misery and banishment—'it is but a little cloud—and it will quickly be gone.' There are none of God's afflicted ones, that have not their intermissions and respites; yes, so small a while does the hand of the Lord rest upon his people, that Luther cannot get diminutives enough to extenuate it; for he calls it a very little little cross that we bear—Isa 26:20, 'Come, my people, enter into your chambers, and shut your doors behind you—hide yourself as it were for a little moment (or for a little space, a little while), until the indignation is over-pass.' The indignation does not pass—but over-pass. The sharpness, shortness, and suddenness of the saints' afflictions, is set forth by the travail of a woman, Joh 16:21, which is sharp, short, and sudden.

4.) Fourthly, The fourth soul-silencing conclusion you have in Lam 3:32 'But though he causes grief, **yet will he have compassion, according to the multitude of his mercies**.' 'In wrath God remembers mercy,' Hab 3:2. 'Weeping may endure for a night—but joy comes in the morning,' Psa 30:5. Their mourning shall last but until morning. God will turn their winter's night into a summer's day, their sighing into singing, their grief into gladness, their mourning into music, their bitter into sweet, their wilderness into a paradise. The life of a Christian is filled up with interchanges of sickness and health, weakness and strength, want and wealth, disgrace and honor, crosses and comforts, miseries and mercies, joys and sorrows, mirth and mourning. All honey would harm us; all wormwood would undo us—a composition of both is the best way in the world to keep our souls in a healthy constitution. It is best and most for the health of the soul that the warm south wind of mercy, and the cold north wind of adversity—do both blow upon it. And though every wind that blows, shall blow good to the saints, yet certainly their sins die most, and their graces thrive best, when they are under the frigid, drying, nipping north wind of calamity, as well as under the warm, nourishing south wind of mercy and prosperity.

(5) Fifthly, The fifth soul-quieting conclusion you have in Lam 3:33, 'For He does not afflict willingly (or as the Hebrew has it, 'from his heart'), 'nor grieve the children of men.' Christians conclude that **God's heart was not in their afflictions, though his hand was**. He takes no delight to afflict his children; it goes against his heart. It is a grief to him to be grievous to them, a pain to him to be punishing of them, a sorrow to him to be striking them. He has no will, no desire, no inclination, no disposition, to that work of afflicting of his people; and therefore he calls it 'his strange work,' Isa 28:21. Mercy and punishment—they flow from God, as the honey and the sting from the bee. The bee yields honey of her own nature—but she does not sting but when she is provoked. God takes delight in showing of mercy, Mic 7:18; he takes no pleasure in giving his people up to adversity, Hos 11:8. Mercy and kindness flows from him freely, naturally; he is never severe, never harsh; he never stings, he never terrifies us—but when he is sadly provoked by us. God's hand sometimes may lie very hard upon his people, when his heart, his affections, at those very times may be yearning towards his people, Jer 31:18-20.

No man can tell how the heart of God stands—by his hand. God's hand of mercy may be open to those against whom his heart is set—as you see in the rich poor fool, and Dives, in the Gospel. And his hand of severity may lie hard upon those on whom he has set his heart—as you may see in Job and Lazarus. And thus you see those gracious, blessed, soul-quieting conclusions about afflictions, that a holy, a prudent silence does include.

Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. Psa 37:7

Sixthly, **A holy, a prudent silence includes and takes in a strict charge, a solemn, command, that conscience lays upon the soul to be quiet and still.** Psa 37:7, 'Rest in the Lord, (or as the Hebrew has it, 'be silent to the Lord'), 'and wait patiently for him.' I charge you, O my soul—not to mutter, nor to murmur; I command you, O my soul, to be dumb and silent under the afflicting hand of God. As Christ laid a charge, a command, upon the boisterous winds and the roaring raging seas—Mat 8:26, 'Be still; and there was a great calm,'—so conscience lays a charge upon the soul to be quiet and still—Psa 27:14, 'Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart—wait, I say, on the Lord.' Peace, O my soul! be still, leave your muttering, leave your murmuring, leave your complaining, leave your chafing, and vexing—and lay your hand upon your mouth, and be silent. Conscience allays and stills all the tumults and uproars that are in the soul, by such like reasonings as the clerk of Ephesus stilled that uproar—Act 19:40, 'For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse.' O my soul! be quiet, be silent, else you will one day be called in question for all those inward mutterings, uproars, and passions that are in you, seeing no sufficient cause can be produced why you should murmur, quarrel, or wrangle—under the righteous hand of God.

Seventhly, **A holy, a prudent silence includes a surrendering, a resigning of ourselves to God, while we are under his afflicting hand.** The silent soul gives himself up to God. The secret language of the soul is this—'Lord, here am I; do with me what you please, write upon me as you please—I give up myself to be at your disposal.'

There was a good woman, who, when she was sick, being asked whether she were willing to live or die, answered, 'Whichever God pleases.' But, said one that stood by, 'If God would refer it to you, which would you choose?' 'Truly,' said she, 'if God would refer it to me, I would even refer it right back to him again.' This was a soul worth gold.

'Well,' says a gracious soul, 'The ambitious man gives himself up to his honors—but I give up myself unto God. The voluptuous man gives himself up to his pleasures—but I give up myself to God. The covetous man gives himself up to his bags of money—but I give up myself to God. The wanton man gives himself up to his lust—but I give up myself to God. The drunkard gives himself up to his cups—but I give up myself to God. The papist gives up himself to his idols—but I give myself to God. The Turk gives up himself to his Mahomet—but I give up myself to God. The heretic gives up himself to his heretical opinions—but I give up myself to God. Lord! lay what burden you will upon me, only let your everlasting arms be under me!

Lord! lay what burden you will upon me, only let your everlasting arms be under me. Strike, Lord, strike, and spare not, for I am lain down in your will, I have learned to say amen to your amen; you have a greater interest in me than I have in myself, and therefore I give up myself unto you, and am willing to be at your disposal, and am ready to receive whatever impression you shall stamp upon me. O blessed Lord! have you not again and again said unto me, as once the king of Israel said to the king of Syria, 'I am yours, and all that I have is yours,' 1Ki 20:4.

God says, "I am yours, O soul! to save you! My mercy is yours to pardon you! My blood is yours to cleanse you! My merits are yours to justify you! My righteousness is yours to clothe you! My Spirit is yours to lead you! My grace is yours to enrich you! My glory is yours to reward you!" And therefore, says a gracious soul, "I cannot but make a resignation of myself unto you. Lord! here I am, do with me as seems good in your own eyes. I know the best way to have my own will, is to resign up myself to your will, and to say amen to your amen."

I have read of a gentleman, who, meeting with a shepherd in a misty morning, asked him what weather it would be? 'It will be,' says the shepherd, 'that weather which pleases me.' And being courteously requested to express his meaning, replied, 'Sir, it shall be whatever weather pleases God; and whatever weather pleases God—pleases me.' When a Christian's will is molded into the will of God, he is sure to have his will. But,

Eighthly and lastly, **A holy, a prudent silence, takes in a patient waiting upon the Lord under our afflictions until deliverance comes**—Psa 11:1-3; Psa 62:5, 'My soul, wait only upon God, for my expectation is from him;' Lam 3:26, 'It is good that a man should both hope, and quietly (or as the Hebrew has it, 'silently') wait for the salvation of the Lord.' The farmer patiently waits for the precious fruits of the earth, the mariner patiently waits for wind and tide, the watchman patiently wait for the dawning of the day; and so does the silent soul in the night of adversity, patiently wait for the dawning of the day of mercy, Jas 5:7-8. The mercies of God are not styled the **swift**—but the **sure** mercies; and therefore a gracious soul waits patiently for them. And thus you see what a gracious, a prudent silence does include.

III. The third thing is, to discover what is included in a holy, a prudent silence under affliction. Now there are eight things that a holy patience includes.

1. First, **A holy, a prudent silence under affliction does not exclude and shut out a sense and feeling of our afflictions**, Psa 39:9, though he 'was silent, and laid his hand upon his mouth,' yet he was very sensible of his **affliction**— Psa 39:10-11, 'Remove your scourge from me; I am overcome by the blow of your hand. You rebuke and discipline men for their sin; you consume their wealth like a moth—each man is but a breath.' He is sensible of his **pain** as well as of his **sin**; and having prayed off his sin in the former verses, he labors here to pray off his pain.

Diseases, aches, sicknesses, pains—they are all the daughters of sin, and he who is not sensible of them as the births and products of sin, does but add to his sin and provoke the Lord to add to his sufferings, Isa 26:9-11. No man shall ever be charged by God for feeling his burden, if he neither frets nor faints under it. Grace does not destroy nature—but rather perfects it. Grace is of a noble offspring; it neither turns men into stocks nor to stoics. The more grace, the more sensible of the tokens, frowns, blows, and lashes—of a displeased Father. Though Calvin, under his greatest pains, was never heard to mutter nor murmur, yet he was heard often to say 'How long, Lord, how long?' A pious commander being shot in battle, when the wound was searched, and the bullet cut out, some standing by, pitying his pain, he replied, Though I **groan**, yet I bless God I do not **grumble**. God allows his people to groan, though not to grumble. It is a God-provoking sin to lie stupid and senseless under the afflicting hand of God. God will heat that man's furnace of affliction sevenfold hotter, who is in the furnace but feels it not.

"Who handed Jacob over to become loot, and Israel to the plunderers? Was it not the Lord, against whom we have sinned? For they would not follow his ways; they did not obey his law. So he poured out on them his burning anger, the violence of war. It enveloped them in flames, yet they did not understand; it consumed them—but they did not take it to heart." Isa 42:24-25. Stupidity lays a man open to the greatest fury and severity.

The physician, when he finds that the potion which he has given his patient will not work, he seconds it with one more violent one; and if that will not work, he gives another yet more violent one. If a gentle plaster will not serve, then the surgeon applies that which is more corroding; and if that will not do, then he makes use of his knife! So when the Lord afflicts, and men feel it not; when he strikes and they grieve not; when he wounds them, and they awake not—then the furnace is made hotter than ever; then his fury burns, then he lays on irons upon irons, bolt upon bolt, and chain upon chain, until he has made their lives a hell. Afflictions are the saints' medicines; and where do you read in all the Scripture that ever any of the saints drunk of these medicines, and were not sensible of it.

2. Secondly, **A holy, a prudent, silence does not shut out prayer for deliverance out of our afflictions.** Though the psalmist lays his hand upon his mouth in the text, yet he prays for deliverance—"Remove your scourge from me; I am overcome by the blow of your hand. Hear my prayer, O Lord, listen to my cry for help; be not deaf to my weeping. For I dwell with you as an alien, a stranger, as all my fathers were. Look away from me, that I may rejoice again before I depart and am no more." Psa 39:10-13. 'Is any among you afflicted? let him pray.' Jas 5:13. 'Call upon me in the day of trouble—I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.' Psa 50:15

Times of affliction, by God's own injunction, are special times of supplication. David's heart was more often out of tune than his harp; but then he prays and presently cries, 'Return to your rest O my soul.' Jonah prays in the whale's belly, and Daniel prays when among the lions, and Job prays when on the ash-heap, and Jeremiah prays when in the dungeon. Yes, the heathen mariners, as stout as they were, when in a storm, they cry every man to his god, Jon 1:5-6. To call upon God, especially in times of distress and trouble, is a lesson that the very light and law of nature teaches. The Persian messenger, though a heathen, says thus—'When the Grecian forces hotly pursued our army, and we must needs venture over the great water Strymon, frozen then—but beginning to thaw, when a hundred to one we had all died for it, with my eyes I saw many of those gallants whom I had heard before so boldly maintain there was no God, every one upon his knees, and devoutly praying that the ice might hold until they got over.' And shall blind heathen nature do more than grace? If the time of affliction be not a time of supplication, I know not what is.

As there are two kinds of antidotes against poison, that is, hot and cold; so there are two kinds of antidotes against all the troubles and afflictions of this life, that is, prayer and patience—the one hot, the other cold—the one quenching, the other quickening. Chrysostom understood this well enough when he cried out—Oh! says he, it is more bitter than death to be robbed of prayer; and thereupon observes that Daniel chose rather to run the hazard of his life, than to lose his prayer. Well! This is the second thing. A holy silence does not exclude prayer; but,

3. Thirdly, **A holy, a prudent silence does not exclude men's being kindly affected and afflicted with their sins, as the meritorious cause of all their sorrows and sufferings**, Lam 3:39-40, 'Why does a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sin? Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord.' Job 40:4, Job 40:6, 'Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer you? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken—but I will not answer; yes, thrice—but I proceed no further.' Mic 7:9, 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned.' **In all our sorrows we should read our sins! When God's hand is upon our backs, our hands should be upon our sins.**

It was a good saying of one, 'I hide not my sins—but I show them. I wipe them not away—but I sprinkle them; I do not excuse them—but accuse them. The beginning of my salvation is the knowledge of my transgression.' When some told Prince Henry, that darling of mankind, that the sins of the people brought that affliction on him, Oh no! said he, I have sins enough of my own to cause that. 'I have sinned,' says David, 'but what have these poor sheep done?' 2Sa 24:17. When a Christian is under the afflicting hand of God, he may well say, 'I may thank this proud heart of mine, this worldly heart, this froward heart, this formal heart, this dull heart, this backsliding heart, this self-seeking heart of mine—for this cup is so bitter, this pain so grievous, this loss so great, this disease so desperate, this wound so incurable! It is my own self, my own sin—which has caused these floods of sorrows to break in upon me! But,

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4. Fourthly, **A holy, a prudent silence does not exclude the teaching and instructing of others, when we are afflicted.** The words of the afflicted stick close; they many times work strongly, powerfully, strangely savingly, upon the souls and consciences of others. Many of Paul's epistles were written to the churches when he was in prison, that is, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon; he begot Onesimus in his bonds, Philem. 10. And many of the brethren in the Lord waxed bold and confident by his bonds, and were confirmed, and made partakers of grace by his ministry, when he was in bonds, Php 1:7, Php 1:13-14.

As the words of dying people do many times stick and work gloriously, so many times do the words of afflicted people work very nobly and efficaciously. I have read of one Adrianus, who, seeing the martyrs suffer such grievous things for the cause of Christ, he asked what that was which enabled them to suffer such things? and one of them named that 1Co 2:9, 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him.' This word was like apples of gold in pictures of silver, Pro 25:11, for it made hint not only a convert—but a martyr too. And this was the means of Justin Martyr's conversion, as himself confesses.

Doubtless, many have been made happy by the words of the afflicted. The tongue of the afflicted has been to many as choice silver. The words of the afflicted many times are both pleasing and profitable; they tickle the ear, and they win upon the heart; they slide insensibly into the hearers' souls, and work efficaciously upon the hearers' hearts—Ecc 10:12, 'The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious.' Jerome reads it, "the words of the mouth of a wise man are grace." They minister grace to others, and they win grace and favor from others. Gracious lips make gracious hearts; gracious words are a grace, an ornament to the speaker, and they are a comfort, a delight, and an advantage to the hearer.

Now, the words of a wise man's mouth are never more gracious, than when he is most afflicted and distressed. Now, you shall find most worth and weight in his words; now his lips, like the spouse's, are like a thread of scarlet; they are red with talking much of a crucified Christ; and they are thin like a thread—not swelled with vain and unprofitable discourses. Now his mouth speaks of wisdom, and his tongue talks judgment, for the law of the Lord is in his heart, Psa 37:30. Now his lips drop as honey-combs, Son 4:11; now his tongue is a tree of life, whose leaves are medicinal, Pro 12:18. As the silver trumpets sounded most joy to the Jews in the day of their gladness, so the mouth of a wise man, like a silver trumpet, sounds most joy and advantage to others in the days of his sadness, Num 10:10.

The heathen man could say—'when a wise man speaks, he opens the rich treasure and wardrobe of his mind'; so may I say, 'when an afflicted saint speaks, Oh the pearl, the treasures that he scatters!' But,

5. Fifthly, **A holy, a prudent silence does not exclude moderate mourning or weeping under the afflicting hand of God.** Isa 38:3, 'And Hezekiah wept sore', or, as the Hebrew has it, 'wept with great weeping.' But was not the Lord displeased with him for his great weeping? No! ver. 5, 'I have heard your prayers, I have seen your tears—behold, I will add unto your days fifteen years.' God had as well a bottle for his tears—as a bag for his sins, Psalm 56:8. There is no water so sweet as the saints' tears, when they do not overflow the banks of moderation. Tears are not mutes; they have a voice, and their oratory is of great prevalence with the almighty God. Therefore the weeping prophet calls out for tears—Lam 2:18, 'Let your tears flow like a river day and night; give yourself no relief; let not the apple of your eye cease;' or, as the Hebrew has it, 'Let not the daughter of your eye be silent.' That which we call the pupil or apple of the eye, the Hebrews call the daughter of the eye, because it is as dear and tender to a man as an only daughter; and because therein appears the likeness of a little daughter. Upon which words, says Bellarmine—'cry aloud—not with your tongue—but with your eyes; not with your words—but with your tears; for that is the prayer that makes the most forcible entry into the ears of the great God of heaven.'

When God strikes, he looks that we should tremble; when his hand is lifted high, he looks that our hearts should stoop low; when he has the rod in his hand, he looks that we should have tears in our eyes, as you may see by comparing of these Scriptures together, Psa 55:2, Psa 38:6, Job 30:26-32. Says the Greek poet—'the better any are—they are more inclining to weeping, especially under affliction.' As you may see in David, whose tears, instead of gems, were the common ornaments of his bed; as Jonathan, Job, Ezra, Daniel, etc. How, says one, shall God wipe away my tears in heaven, if I shed none on earth? And how shall I reap in joy, if I sow not in tears? I was born with tears, and I shall die with tears—and why then should I live without them in this valley of tears?

There is as well a time to weep, as there is a time to laugh; and a time to mourn, as well as a time to dance, Ecc 3:4. The mourning garment among the Jews was the black garment, and the black garment was the mourning garment—Psa 43:2, 'Why do you go *mourning*?' The Hebrew word signifies 'black'. Why go you in black? Sometimes Christians must put off their gay ornaments, and put on their black—their mourning garments, Exo 33:3-6. But,

6. Sixthly, **A gracious, a prudent silence does not exclude sighing, groaning, or roaring under afflictions.** A man may sigh, and groan and roar under the hand of God, and yet be silent. It is not sighing—but muttering; it is not groaning—but grumbling; it is not roaring—but murmuring—which is opposite to a holy silence—Exo 2:23, 'And the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage.' Job 3:24, 'For my sighing comes before I eat.' His sighing, like bad weather, came unsent for and unsought—so Psa 38:9, 'Lord, all my desire is before you; and no groaning is not hid from you.' Psa 102:5, 'By reason of the voice of my groaning, my bones cleave to my skin.' Job 3:24, 'And my roarings are poured out like the waters.' Psa 38:8, 'I am feeble and sore broken; I have roared by reason of the disturbance of my heart.' Psa 22:1, 'My, God! my God! why have you forsaken me? why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my roaring?' Psa 32:3, 'When I kept silence, my bones waxed old, through my roarings all the day long.' He roars—but does not rage; he roars—but does not repine.

When a man is in extremity, nature prompts him to roar, and the law of grace is not against it. And though sighing, roaring, groaning, cannot deliver a man out of his misery, yet they do give some ease to a man under his misery. When Solon wept for his son's death, one said to him, Weeping will not help. He answered, 'Alas! I weep, because weeping will not help.' So a Christian many times sighs, because sighing will not help; and he groans, because groaning will not help; and he roars, because roaring will not help. Sometimes the sorrows of the saints are so great, that all tears are dried up, and they can get no ease by weeping; and therefore for a little ease they fall a-sighing and a-groaning. And this may be done, and yet the heart may be quiet and silent before the Lord. Peter wept and sobbed, and yet was silent. Sometimes the sighs and groans of a saint do in some manner, tell that which his tongue can in no manner utter. But,

7. Seventhly, **A holy, a prudent silence, does not exclude nor shut out the use of any just or lawful means, whereby people may be delivered out of their afflictions.** God would not have his people so in love with their afflictions, as not to use such righteous means as may deliver them out of their afflictions. Mat 10:23, 'But when they persecute you in this city, *flee* into another.' Act 12:5, When Peter was in prison, the saints thronged together to pray, as the original has it, and they were so instant and earnest with God in prayer, they did so beseech and besiege the Lord, they did so beg and bounce at heaven-gate, that God could have no rest, until, by many miracles of power and mercy, he had returned Peter as a bosom-favor to them. "After many days had gone by, the Jews conspired to kill him—but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him. But his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall." Act 9:23-25

The blood of the saints is precious in God's eye, and it should not be vile in their own eyes. When providence opens a door of escape, there is no reason why the saints should set themselves as marks for their enemies to shoot at. 2Th 3:1-2, The apostles desired the brethren 'to pray for them, that they may be delivered from absurd and wicked men; for all men have not faith.' It is a mercy worth a seeking, to be delivered out of the hands of wicked, villainous, and troublesome men.

Afflictions are evil in themselves, and we may desire and endeavor to be delivered from them, Jas 5:14-15, Isa 38:18-21. Both inward and outward means are to be used for our own preservation. Had not Noah built an ark, he would have been swept away with the flood, though he had been with Nimrod and his gang on the tower of Babel, which was raised to the height of some 2000 feet. Though we may not trust in means; yet we may and ought to use the means. In the use of them, eye that God that can only bless them, and you do your work. As the pilot that guides the ship has his hand upon the rudder, and his eye on the star that directs him at the same time; so when your hand is upon the means, let your eye be upon your God, and deliverance will come. We may neglect God as well by neglecting of means, as by trusting in means. It is best to use them, and in the use of them, to live above them. Augustine tells of a man, that being fallen into a pit, one passing by falls to questioning of him, as to how he got into the pit. Oh! said the poor man, ask me not how I came in—but help me and tell me how I may come out! The application is easy. But,

8. Eighthly, and lastly, **A holy, a prudent silence, does not exclude a just and sober complaining against the authors, contrivers, abettors, or instruments of our afflictions.** 2Ti 4:14, 'Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done.' This Alexander is conceived by some to be that Alexander that is mentioned, Act 19:33, who stood so close to Paul at Ephesus, that he ran the hazard of losing his life by appearing on his side. Yet if glorious professors come to be furious persecutors, Christians may complain—2Co 11:24, 'Five different times the Jews gave me thirty-nine lashes.' They inflict, says Maimonides, no more than forty stripes, though he be as strong as Samson—but if he be weak, they abate of that number. They scourged Paul with the greatest severity, in making him suffer so often the utmost extremity of the Jewish law, when as those who were weak had their punishment mitigated—ver. 25, 'Thrice was I beaten with rods,' that is, by the Romans, whose custom it was to beat the guilty with rods.

If Pharaoh makes Israel groan—Israel may make his complaint against Pharaoh to the Keeper of Israel, Exod. 2. If the proud and blasphemous king of Assyria shall come with his mighty army to destroy the people of the Lord—Hezekiah may spread his letter of blasphemy before the Lord. Isa 37:14-21. Anathema maranatha.

It was the saying of Socrates, that every man in this life had need of a faithful friend and a bitter enemy; the one to advise him, and the other to make him look about him; and this Hezekiah found by experience.

Though Joseph's bow abode in strength, and the arm of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob. Yet Joseph may say, that the archers, (or the arrow-masters, as the Hebrew has it,) have severely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him. Gen 49:23-24. And so David sadly complained of Doeg. Yes, Christ himself, who was the most perfect pattern for silence under sorest trials, complains against Judas, Pilate, and the rest of his persecutors, Psa 69:20, Psa 69:30, etc. Yes, though God will make his people's enemies to be the workmen that shall fit them and square them for his building; to be goldsmiths to add pearls to their crown; to be rods to beat off their dust; to be scullions to scour off their rust; to be fire to purge away their dross; and water to cleanse away their filthiness, fleshliness, and earthliness; yet may they point at them, and pour out their complaints to God against them, Psa 132:2-18. This truth I might make good by over a hundred texts of Scripture; but it is time to come to the reasons of the point.

"Mute Christian under the Smarting Rod" or,
"The Silent Soul with Sovereign Antidotes"

by Thomas Brooks, 1659, London.

"I was silent; I would not open my mouth, for
You are the one who has done this!" Psa 39:9

IV. WHY must Christians be mute and silent under the greatest afflictions, the saddest providences, and sharpest trials which they meet with in this world? I answer,

Reason 1. **That they may the better hear and understand the voice of the rod.** As the **word** has a voice, the **Spirit** a voice, and **conscience** a voice—so God's **rod** has a voice. Afflictions are the rod of God's anger, the rod of his displeasure, and his rod of revenge. God gives a commission to his rod—to awaken his people—to reform his people—or else to revenge the quarrel of his covenant upon them, if they will not hear the rod, and kiss the rod, and sit mute and silent under the rod—Mic 6:9, 'The voice of the Lord calls out to the city (and it is wise to fear Your name,) "Pay attention to the rod and the One who ordained it." God's rods are not mutes, they are all vocal, they are all speaking as well as smiting. Every twig has a voice. 'Ah! soul,' says one twig, 'you say it smarts. Well! tell me, is it good to provoke a jealous God?' Jer 4:18. 'Ah! soul,' says another twig, 'you say it is bitter, it reaches to your heart; but have not your own doings procured these things?' Rom 6:20-21. 'Ah! soul,' says another twig, 'where is the profit, the pleasure, the sweet that you have found in wandering from God?' Hos 2:7. 'Ah! soul,' says another twig, 'was it not best with you, when you were high in your communion with God, and when you were humble and close in your walking with God?' Mic 6:8. 'Ah! Christian,' says another twig, 'will you search your heart, and try your ways, and turn to the Lord your God?' Lam. 3:40. 'Ah! soul,' says another twig, 'will you die to sin more than ever, and to the world more than ever, and to relations more than ever, and to yourself more than ever?' Rom 14:6-8; Gal 6:18. 'Ah! soul,' says another twig, 'will you live more to Christ than ever, and cleave closer to Christ than ever, and prize Christ more than ever, and venture further for Christ than ever?' 'Ah! soul,' says another twig, 'will you love Christ with a more inflamed love, and hope in Christ with a more raised hope, and depend upon Christ with a greater confidence, and wait upon Christ with more invincible patience?'

Now, if the soul be not mute and silent under the rod, how is it possible that it should ever hear the voice of the rod, or that it should ever hearken to the voice of every twig of the rod? The rod that is in the hands of earthly fathers has a voice—but children hear it not, they understand it not, until they are hushed and quiet, and brought to kiss it, and sit silently under it; no more shall we hear or understand the voice of the rod that is in our heavenly Father's hand, until we come to kiss it, and sit silently under it. But,

Reason 2. **Gracious souls should be mute and silent under their greatest afflictions and sharpest trials—that they may difference and distinguish themselves from the men of the world, who usually fret and fling, mutter or murmur, curse and swagger, when they are under the afflicting hand of God.**

"They will wander through the land, dejected and hungry. When they are famished, they will become enraged, and, looking upward, will curse their king and their God. They will look toward the earth and see only distress, darkness, and the gloom of affliction, and they will be driven into thick darkness." Isa 8:21-22. Ah! how fretful and froward, how disturbed and distracted, how mad and forlorn—are these poor wretches under the rebukes of God! They look upward and downward this way and that way, on this side and on that, and finding no help, no support, no support, no deliverance, like Bedlams, yes, like incarnate devils—they fall upon cursing of God!

"We all roar like bears; we moan mournfully like doves. We look for justice—but find none; for deliverance—but it is far away." Isa 59:11. They express their inward vexation and indignation by roaring like bears. When bears are robbed of their whelps, or taken in a pit, oh how dreadfully will they roar, rage, tear, and tumble! So when wicked people are fallen into the pit of affliction, oh how will they roar, rage, tear, and cry out! not of their sins—but of their punishments; as Cain, 'My punishment is greater than I am able to bear!' Gen 4:13; Isa 51:20, 'Your sons have fainted, they lie at the head of all the streets, as a wild bull in a net—they are full of the fury of the Lord, the rebuke of your God.' When the huntsman has taken the wild bull in his net, and so entangled him, that he is not able to wind himself out, oh, how fierce and furious will he be! how will he spend himself in struggling to get out! Such wild bulls are wicked men—when they are taken in the net of affliction.

It is said of Marcellus the Roman general, that he could not be quiet—neither conquered nor conqueror! It is so with wicked men; they cannot be quiet, neither full nor fasting, neither sick nor well, neither in wealth nor want, neither in bonds nor at liberty, neither in prosperity nor in adversity—"Babylon will be a heap of ruins, a haunt of jackals, an object of horror and scorn, a place where no one lives. Her people all roar like young lions, they growl like lion cubs." Jer 51:37-38. When the lion roars, all the beasts of the field tremble, Amo 3:8. When the lion roars, many creatures that could outrun him are so amazed and astonished at the terror of his roar, that they are not able to stir from the place. Such roaring lions are wicked men, when they are under the smarting rod—"They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues—but they refused to repent and glorify him. Men gnawed their tongues in agony and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores—but they refused to repent of what they had done." Rev 16:9-11

And therefore gracious souls have cause to be silent under their sorest trials, that they may difference and distinguish themselves from wicked men, who are 'like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt', Isa 57:20. The verb *rasha* signifies to make a stir, to be exceeding busy, unquiet, or troublesome. Ah! what a stir do wicked men make, when they are under the afflicting hand of God! Ah! the sea is restless and unquiet when there is no storm; it cannot stand still—but has its flux and reflex; so it is much more restless, when by tempest upon tempest it is made to roar and rage, to foam and cast up mire and dirt. The raging sea is a fit emblem of a wicked man, who is under God's afflicting hand.

Reason 3. A third reason why gracious souls should be silent and mute under their sharpest trials is, **that they may be conformable to Christ their head, who was dumb and silent under his sorest trials.**

"He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth. Like a lamb led to the slaughter and like a sheep silent before her shearers, He did not open His mouth. Isa 53:7. Christ was tongue-tied under all his sorrows and sufferings—"He did not commit sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth; when reviled, He did not revile in return; when suffering, He did not threaten—but committed Himself to the One who judges justly." 1Pe 2:22-23. Christ upon the cross did not read us a lecture of patience and silence—but he has also set us a copy or pattern of both, to be transcribed and imitated by us when we are under the smarting rod. It will be our sin and shame if we do not bear up with patience and silence under all our sufferings, considering what an admirable copy Christ has set before us.

It is said of Antiochus, that before going to battle, he showed unto his elephants the blood of the grapes and mulberries—to provoke them the better to fight. So the Holy Spirit has set before us the injuries and abuses, the sorrows and sufferings, the pains and torments, the sweat and blood of our dearest Lord, and his invincible patience, and admirable silence under all—to provoke us and encourage us to imitate the Captain of our salvation, in patience and silence under all our sufferings.

Jerome having read the life and death of Hilarion—one that lived graciously and died comfortably—folded up the book, saying—Well! Hilarion shall be the champion that I will follow; his good life shall be my example, and his good death my precedent. Oh! how much more should we all say—We have read how Christ has been afflicted, oppressed, distressed, despised, persecuted, etc.; and we have read how speechless, how tongue-tied, how patient, and how silent he has been under all; oh! he shall be the copy which we shall write after, the pattern which we will walk by, the champion which we will follow! But, alas! alas! how rare is it to find a man that may be applauded with the eulogy of Salvian—an excellent disciple of a singular master. The heathens had this notion among them, as Lactantius reports, that the way to honor their gods was to be like them; and therefore some would be wicked, counting it a dishonor to their gods to be unlike to them. I am sure the way to honor our Christ, is in patience and silence to be like to Christ, especially when a smarting rod is upon our backs, and a bitter cup put into our hands.

Reason 4. The fourth reason why the people of God should be mute and silent under their afflictions, is this, **because it is ten thousand times a greater judgment and affliction, to be given to a fretful spirit, a froward spirit, a muttering spirit under an affliction—than it is to be afflicted.** This is both the devil's sin, and the devil's punishment. God is still afflicting, crossing and vexing him; and he is still a-fretting, repining, vexing, and rising up against God. No sin like the devil's sin, no punishment like the devil's punishment. A man were better to have all the afflictions of all the afflicted throughout the world at once upon him—than to be given up to a froward spirit—to a muttering, murmuring heart under the least affliction. When you see a soul fretting, vexing, and stamping under the mighty hand of God, you see one of Satan's first-born, one that resembles him to the life. No child can be so much like the father, as this froward soul is like to the father of lies.

Though he has been in chains almost this six thousand years, yet he has never lain still one day, nor one night, no nor one hour in all this time—but is still a-fretting vexing, tossing and tumbling in his chains, like a princely bedlam. He is a lion—not a lamb; a roaring lion—not a sleepy lion; not a lion standing still—but a lion going up and down; he is not satisfied with the prey he has already gotten—but is restless in his designs to fill hell with souls, 1Pe 5:8. **He never lacks an apple for an Eve**, nor a grape for a Noah, nor a change of clothing for a Gehazi, nor a wedge of gold for an Achan, nor a crown for an Absalom, nor a bag of silver for a Judas, nor a world for a Demas. If you look into one company, there you shall find Satan a-dishing out his meat to every palate; if you look into another company, there you shall find him fitting a lace to every shoe; if you look into a third company, there you shall find him suiting a garment to every back. He is under wrath, and cannot but be restless. Here, with Jael, he allures poor souls in with milk—and murders them with a nail! There, with Joab, he embraces with one hand—and stabs with another! Here with Judas, he kisses—and betrays! And there, with the whore of Babylon, he presents a golden cup—with poison in it! He cannot be quiet, though his bolts be always on!

And the more unquiet any are under the rebukes of God, the more such resemble Satan—whose whole life is filled up with vexing and fretting against the Lord. Let not any think, says Luther, that the devil is now dead, nor yet asleep, for as he who keeps Israel, so he who hates Israel, neither slumbers nor sleeps. But; in the next place,

Reason 5. A fifth reason why gracious souls should be mute and silent under the greatest afflictions and sharpest trials that do befall then is this—**because a holy, a prudent silence under afflictions, under miseries, does best capacitate and fit the afflicted for the receipt of miseries**. When the rolling bottle lies still, you may pour into it your sweetest or your strongest waters; when the rolling, tumbling soul lies still, then God can best pour into it the sweet waters of mercy, and the strong waters of divine consolation. You read of the 'peaceable fruits of righteousness'—Heb 12:11. 'Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous—but grievous; nevertheless, afterwards it yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto those who are exercised thereby.' Jas 3:18, 'And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace, by those who make peace.'

The still and quiet soul is like a ship that lies still and quiet in the harbor; you may take in what goods, what commodities you please, while the ship lies quiet and still—so when the soul is quiet and still under the hand of God, it is most fitted and advantaged to take in much of God, of Christ, of heaven, of the promises, of ordinances, and of the love of God, the smiles of God, the communications of God, and the counsel of God. But when souls are unquiet, they are like a ship in a storm, they can take in nothing.

Luther, speaking of God, says, God does not dwell in Babylon—but in Salem. Babylon signifies confusion, and Salem signifies peace. Now God dwells not in spirits that are unquiet and in confusion—but he dwells in peaceable and quiet spirits. Unquiet spirits can take in neither counsel nor comfort, grace nor peace, etc.—Psa 77:2, 'My soul refused to be comforted.' The inpatient patient will take down no cordials; he has no eye to see, nor hand to take, nor palate to relish, nor stomach to digest—anything that makes for his health and welfare. When the man is sick and froward, nothing will relieve him; the sweetest music will make no melody in his ears—"Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the Lord.' Moses reported this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and cruel bondage." Exo 6:6-9.

The choicest cordials and comforts that heaven or earth could afford are here held forth to them—but they have no hand to receive them. Here Moses' lips drops honey-combs—but they can taste no sweetness in them. Here the best of earth and the best of heaven is set before them—but their souls are shut up, and can receive nothing. Here is such ravishing music of paradise as might abundantly delight their hearts and please their ears—but they cannot hear. Here are soul-enlivening, soul-supporting, soul-strengthening, soul-comforting, soul-raising, and soul-refreshing words—but they cannot hearken to them—"Moses reported this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and cruel bondage." They were under their anguish feverish fits, and so could neither hear nor see, taste nor take in—anything that might be mercy or a comfort to them. They were sick with impatience and discontent—and these humors being grown strong—nothing would work with them, nothing would agree with them. When people are under strong pangs of passion, they have no ears neither for reason nor piety.

Reason 6. A sixth reason why gracious souls should be silent under the smarting rod, is this, namely—**because it is fruitless, it is futile to strive, to contest or contend with God**. No man has ever got anything, by muttering or murmuring under the hand of God, except it has been more frowns, blows, and wounds. Such as will not lie quiet and still, when mercy has tied them with silken cords—justice will put them in iron chains! If *golden fetters* will not hold you, *iron fetters* shall! If Jonah will vex and fret and fling; justice will fling him overboard, to cool him, and quell him, and keep him prisoner in the whale's belly until he is vomited up, and his spirit made quiet before the Lord. What you get by struggling and grumbling—you may put in your eye, and weep it out when you are done—"But am I the one they are provoking? declares the Lord. Are they not rather harming themselves, to their own shame? Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: My anger and my wrath will be poured out on this place, on man and beast, on the trees of the field and on the fruit of the ground, and it will burn and not be quenched." Jer 7:19-20. 'Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?' 1Co 10:22. Zanchy observes these two things from these words:

1. That it is foolish to be provoking God to wrath, because he is stronger than we.

2. That though God be stronger than we, yet there are those who do provoke him to wrath. And certainly there are none that do more provoke him than those who fume and fret when his hand is upon them!

Though the cup be bitter—yet it is put into your hand by your Father! Though the cross be heavy—yet he who has laid it on your shoulders will bear the heaviest end of it himself! Why, then, should you mutter? Shall bears and lions take blows and knocks from their keepers, and will you not take a few blows and knocks from the keeper of Israel? Why should the clay contend with the potter, or the creature with his creator, or the servant with his master, or weakness with strength, or a poor nothing creature with an omnipotent God? Can stubble stand before the fire? Can chaff abide before the whirlwind? Can a worm ward off the blow of the Almighty?

A froward and impatient spirit under the hand of God will but add chain to chain, cross to cross, yoke to yoke, and burden to burden. The more men tumble and toss in their feverish fits, the worse they distemper; and the longer it will be before the cure be effected. The easiest and the surest way of cure is to lie still and quiet until the poison of the distemper be sweat out. Where patience has its perfect work, there the cure will be certain and easy. When a man has his broken leg set, he lies still and quiet, and so his cure is easily and speedily wrought; but when a horse's leg is set, he frets and flings, he flounces and flies out, unjointing it again and again, and so his cure is the more difficult and tedious. Such Christians that under the hand of God are like the horse or mule—fretting and flinging—will but add to their own sorrows and sufferings, and put the day of their deliverance further off.

Reason 7. A seventh reason why Christians should be mute and silent under their afflictions is, **because hereby they shall cross and frustrate Satan's great design and expectation**. In all the afflictions he brought upon Job, Satan's design was not so much to make Job a beggar—as it was to make him a blasphemer; it was not so much to make Job outwardly miserable—as it was to make Job inwardly miserable, by occasioning him to mutter and murmur against the righteous hand of God, that so he might have had some matter of accusation against him to the Lord. Satan is the unwearied accuser of the brethren—Rev 12:10, 'The accuser of the brethren is cast down, who accuses them before our God day and night.' Satan is the great tempter and accuser between God and his children**. He has a mint constantly going in hell**, where, as an untiring mint-master, he is still a-coming and hammering out of accusations against the saints. First, he tempts and allures souls to sin—and then accuses them of those very sins he has tempted them to—that so he may disgrace them before God, and bring them, if it were possible, out of favor with God. And though he knows beforehand that God and his people are, by the bond of the covenant, and by the blood of the Redeemer—so closely united that they can never be severed—yet such is his rage and wrath, envy and malice, that he will endeavor that which he knows he shall never effect!

Could he but have made Job froward or fretting under the rod, he would have quickly carried the tidings to heaven, and have been so bold as to have asked God whether this was a posture befitting such a person, of whom God himself had given so glorious a character! Satan knows that there is more evil in the least sin—than there is in all the afflictions which can be inflicted upon a person; and if he could but have made a breach upon Job's patience, ah, how would he have insulted over God himself! Could he but have made Job a mutineer, he would quickly have pleaded for martial law to have been executed upon him; but Job, by remaining mute and silent under all his trials, puts Satan to a blush, and spoils all his projects at once. The best way to outwit the devil, is to be silent under the hand of God; he who mutters is foiled by him—but he who is silent overcomes him; and to conquer a devil is more than to conquer a world!

Reason 8. The eighth and last reason why Christians should be silent and mute under their sorest trials, is this—**that they may be conformable to those noble patterns that are set before them by other saints, who have been patient and silent under the smarting rod**. As Aaron, Lev 10:3; so Eli, 1Sa 3:18; so David, 2Sa 16:7-13; so Job 1:21-22; so Eliakim, Shebnah, and Joab, Isa 36:11-12. So those saints in that Act 21:12-15; and that cloud of witnesses pointed at in Hebrews 12. Gracious examples are more awakening, more convincing, more quickening, more provoking, and more encouraging—than precepts; because in them we see that the exercise of grace and godliness is possible, though it be difficult.

When we see Christians, who are subject to like infirmities with ourselves, mute and silent under the afflicting hand of God—we see that it is possible that we may attain to the same noble temper of being—tongue-tied under God's smarting rod. Certainly it is our greatest honor and glory, in this world, to be eyeing and imitating the highest and worthiest examples. What Plutarch said of Demosthenes, that he was excellent at *praising* the worthy acts of his ancestors—but not so good at *imitating* them—may be said of many in these days. Oh! they are very forward and excellent at praising the patience of Job—but not at imitating it; at praising the silence of Aaron—but not at imitating it; at praising David's silence—but not at imitating it; at praising Eli's muteness—but not at imitating it. It was the height of Caesar's glory to walk in the steps of Alexander; and of Selymus, a Turkish emperor, to walk in Caesar's steps; and of Themistocles to walk in Hiltiades's steps. Oh! how much more should we account it our highest glory to imitate the worthy examples of those worthies, of whom this world is not worthy! It speaks out much of God within, when men are striving to write after the fairest copies. And thus much for the reasons of the point. I come now to the,

V. APPLICATION

You see, beloved, by what has been said, that it is the greatest duty and concernment of Christians to be mute and silent under the greatest afflictions, the saddest providences, and the sharpest trials that they meet with in this world. If this be so, then this truth looks sourly and wistly upon several sorts of people. As,

1. First, **This looks sourly and sadly upon murmurers, upon such as do nothing but mutter and murmur under the afflicting hand of God.** This was Israel's sin of old, and this is England's sin this day. Ah! what murmuring is there against God, what murmuring against instruments, and what murmuring against providences—is to be found among us! Some murmur at what they have lost, others murmur at what they fear they shall lose! Some murmur that they are no higher, others murmur because they are so low! Some murmur because such a party rules, and others mutter because they themselves are not in the saddle! Some murmur because their mercies are not so great as others' are; some murmur because their mercies are not so many as others' are! Some murmur because they are afflicted, and others murmur because such and such are not afflicted as well as they. Ah, England, England! had you no more sins upon you—your murmuring would be enough to undo you, did not God exercise much pity and compassion towards you! But more of this hereafter, and therefore let this touch for the present suffice.

2. Secondly, **This truth looks sourly upon those who fret, chafe, and vex when they are under the afflicting hand of God.** Many, when they feel the rod to smart—ah, how they do fret and fume! Isa 8:21, 'Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land; when they are famished, they will become enraged and, looking upward, will curse their king and their God.' Pro 19:3, 'A man's own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the Lord.' The heart may be fretful and froward when the tongue does not blaspheme. Folly brings man into misery, and misery makes man to fret. Man in misery is more apt to fret and chafe against the Lord, than to fret and chafe against his sin which has brought him into sufferings, 2Ki 6:33, Psa 37:1, Psa 37:7-8.

A fretful soul dares fly at God himself! When Pharaoh is troubled with the frets, he dares spit in the very face of God himself—'Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?' Exo 5:2. And when Jonah is in a fretting humour, he dares tell God to his face, 'that he does well to he angry,' Jon 4:8. Jonah had done well if he had been angry with his sin—but he did very ill to be angry with his God! God will vex every vein in that man's heart, before he has done with him, who fumes and frets, because he cannot snap in sunder the cords with which he is bound, Eze 16:43. Sometimes good men are *sick of the frets*—but when they are, it costs them dear, as Job and Jonah found by experience. No man has ever got anything by his fretting and flinging, except it has been harder blows or heavier chains; therefore fret not when God strikes!

3. Thirdly, **This truth looks sourly upon those who charge God foolishly in the day of their adversity.** "Why should any living man complain when punished for his sins?" Lam 3:39. He who has deserved a hanging—has no reason to charge the judge with cruelty if he escapes with a whipping! And we who have deserved a damning—have no reason to charge God for being too severe, if we escape with a fatherly lashing! Rather than a man will take the blame, and quietly bear the shame of his own folly—he will put it off upon God himself, Gen 3:12. It is a very evil thing, when we shall go to accuse God, that we may excuse ourselves and unblame ourselves; that we may blame our God, and lay the fault anywhere rather than upon our own hearts and ways.

Job was a man of a more noble spirit—Job 1:22, 'In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.' When God some men—then they presently charge God foolishly; they put him to bear the brunt and blame of all; but this will be bitterness in the end. When you are under affliction, you may humbly tell God that you feel his hand heavy; but you must not blame him because his hand is heavy. No man has ever yet been able to make good a charge against God; and will you be able? Surely not! By charging God foolishly in the day of your calamity, you do but provoke the Lord to charge you through and through, more fiercely and furiously, with his most deadly darts of renewed misery! It is your greatest wisdom to blame your sins, and lay your hand upon your mouth; for why should *folly* charge *innocence*? That man is far off from being mute and silent under the hand of God—who dares charge God himself for laying his hand upon him! But,

4. Fourthly, **This truth looks sourly and sadly upon such as will not be silent nor satisfied under the afflicting hand of God, except the Lord will give them the particular reasons why he lays his hand upon them.** Good men sometimes dash their feet against this stumbling stone—Jer 15:18, 'Why is my pain unending and my wound grievous and incurable? Will you be to me like a deceptive brook, like a spring that fails?' **Though God has always reason for what he does—yet he is not bound to show us the reasons of his doings.** Jeremiah's passion was up, his blood was hot; and now nothing will silence nor satisfy him but the reasons why his pain was perpetual, and his wound incurable. So Job 7:20, 'Why have you set me as a mark against you, so that I am a burden to myself?' It is an evil and a dangerous thing to cavil at, or to question God's proceedings, who is the chief Lord of all, and who may do with his own what he pleases, Rom 9:20, Dan 4:3, Dan 4:36. He is unaccountable and uncontrollable; and therefore who shall say—Why are you doing this? As no man may question God's right to afflict him, nor his righteousness in afflicting of him; so no man may question the reasons why he afflicts him. As no man can compel God to give a reason of his doings, so no man may dare to ask him the particular reasons of his doings.

Kings are not bound to give their subjects a reason of their doings; and shall we bind God to give us a reason of his doings, who is the King of kings and Lord of Lords, and whose will is the true and only rule of justice? Ecc 8:4, Rev 1:5.

The *general grounds and reasons* which God has laid down in his word why he afflicts his people, as—that is for their profit, Heb 12:10; for the purging away of their sins, Isa 1:25; for the reforming of their lives, Psa 119:67, Psa 119:71; and for the saving of their souls, 1Co 11:32—should work them to be silent and satisfied under all their afflictions; though God should never satisfy their curiosity in giving them an account of some more hidden causes which may lie secret in the abysses of his eternal knowledge and infallible will.

Curiosity is the spiritual drunkenness of the soul; and as the drunkard will never be satisfied, be the cup ever so deep, unless he see the bottom of it—so some curious Christians, whose souls are overspread with *the leprosy of curiosity*, will never be satisfied until they come to see the bottom and the most secret reasons of all God's dealings towards them. But they are fools in folio, who affect to know more than God would have them. Did not Adam's curiosity render him and his posterity fools in folio? And what pleasure can we take to see ourselves every day fools in print? As a man's eyes, by gazing at the sun, may grow dark and dim, and see less than otherwise he might; so many, by a curious prying into the secret reasons of God's dealings with them, come to grow so dark and dim, that they cannot see those plain reasons that God has laid down in his word why he afflicts and tries his children!

I have read of one Sir William Champney, who was the first man that ever built a turret on the top of his house—that he might the better overlook all his neighbors. But so it happened, that not long after he was struck blind—so that he who would not be satisfied to see as others saw—but must see more than others—saw nothing at all, through the just judgment of God upon him! And so it is a just and righteous thing with God to strike such with spiritual blindness, who will not be satisfied with seeing the reasons laid down in the word why God afflicts them—but they must be curiously prying and searching into the hidden and more secret reasons of his severity towards them!

Ah, Christian! it is your wisdom and duty to sit silent and mute under the afflicting hand of God upon the account of revealed reasons, without making any curious inquiry into those more secret reasons which are locked up in the golden cabinet of God's own bosom! "The secret things belong to the Lord our God." Deu 29:29

5. Fifthly, **This truth looks sourly and sadly upon those who, instead of being silent and mute under their afflictions, use all sinful shifts and ways, to shift themselves out of their troubles;** who care not though they break with God, and break with men, and break with their own consciences—so long as they may but break off the chains that are upon them; who care not by what means the prison door is opened, so long as they may but escape; nor by what hands their bolts are knocked off, so long as they may be at liberty. Job 36:21, 'Beware of turning to evil, which you seem to prefer to affliction.' **He makes but an ill choice—who chooses sin rather than suffering**! And yet such an ill choice good men have sometimes made, when troubles have compassed them round about. Though no lion roars like that in a man's own bosom—conscience; yet some, to deliver themselves from troubles without, have set that lion a-roaring within! Some, to deliver themselves from outward tortures, have put themselves under inward torments. He purchases his freedom from affliction at too dear a rate—who buys it with the loss of a good name or a good conscience.

Now, because there is even in good men sometimes too great an aptness and proneness to sin and shift themselves out of afflictions, when they should rather be mute and silent under them, give me leave to lay down these **six considerations to prevent it:**

(1.) First **Consider, that there is infinitely more evil in the least sin—than there is in the greatest miseries and afflictions which can possibly come upon you!** Yes, there is more evil in the least sin than there is in all the troubles that ever come upon the world; yes, than there is in all the miseries and torments of hell. The least sin is an offence to the great God; it is a wrong to the immortal soul; it is a breach of God's righteous law; it cannot be washed away but by the blood of Jesus; it can shut the soul out of heaven, and shut the soul up as a prisoner in hell forever and ever! The least sin is rather to be avoided and prevented—than the greatest sufferings. If this cockatrice be not crushed in the egg—it will soon become a serpent! Sin, if but thought on and pondered—will break out into action—action into custom—custom into habit—and then both body and soul are lost irrecoverably to all eternity! The least sin is very dangerous. Caesar was stabbed to death with a small needle; Herod was eaten up by small worms; Pope Adrian was choked with a gnat; a mouse is but little, yet kills an elephant if he gets up into his trunk; a scorpion is little, yet able to sting a lion to death; though the leopard be great, yet he is poisoned with a head of garlic; the least spark may consume the greatest house; the least leak will sink the greatest ship; a whole arm has been gangrened by a pick of the little finger; a little opened door may betray the greatest city; a pinch of poison diffuses itself into all parts, until it strangles the vital spirits, and turns out the soul from the body. If the serpent can but wriggle in his tail by an evil thought, he will soon make a surprise of the soul—as you see in that sad instance of Adam and Eve.

'The trees of the forest,' says one in a parable, 'held a solemn parliament, wherein they addressed the innumerable wrongs which **the axe** had done them. They therefore made an act, that no tree should hereafter lend the axe-head even a twig. The axe-head traveled up and down the forest, begging wood from the cedar, oak, ash, elm, even of the poplar; but not one would lend him a chip. At last he asked for just a small twig from each the trees—so he could cut down the briars and bushes—alleging, that such shrubs did but suck away the juice of the ground, and hinder the growth, and obscure the glory of the beautiful and goodly trees. Upon these terms, the trees all agreed to give him a twig. The axe-head pretends a thorough reformation—but behold a sad deformation, for when he had got the twigs made into a handle—down went the cedar, oak, ash, elm, and all that had stood in his way!

Such are the subtle reaches of sin; it will promise to remove the briars of afflictions and troubles, which hinder the soul of that juice, sweetness, comfort, delight, and contentment, which otherwise it might enjoy. Oh! do but now yield a little to sin, and instead of removing your troubles—it will cut down your peace, your hopes, your comforts, yes, it will cut down your precious soul! What is the scratch on the hand—to a stab at the heart? No more are the greatest afflictions to the least sins! And therefore, Christians, never use sinful shifts to shift yourselves out of troubles—but rather be mute and silent under them, until the Lord shall work out your deliverance from them. But,

(2.) Secondly, **Consider it is an impossible thing for any to sin themselves out of their troubles.** Abraham, Job, and Jonah attempted it—but could not effect it. The devils have experienced this for nearly this six thousand years. They had not been now in chains—if they could have sinned themselves out of their chains. Could the damned in hell, sin themselves out of everlasting burning, there would have been none now a-roaring in that devouring unquenchable fire! Isa 33:14. Hell would have no inhabitants, could they but sin themselves out of it! Ah! Christians, devils and damned spirits shall as soon sin themselves out of hell—as you shall be able to sin yourselves out of your afflictions. Christians! you shall as soon stop the sun from running her course; fit the sea in a nut-shell; compass the earth with one step; and raise the dead at your pleasure—as ever you shall be able to sin yourselves out of your sufferings! And therefore it is better to be silent and quiet under them—than to attempt that which is impossible to accomplish. This second consideration will receive further confirmation by the next particular—

(3.) Thirdly, **As it is an IMPOSSIBLE thing, so it is a very DAMAGING, a very DANGEROUS thing—to attempt to sin yourselves out of your troubles**; for by attempting to sin yourselves out of your trouble—you will sin yourselves into many troubles, as Jonah and Jacob did; and by laboring to sin yourselves out of less troubles—you will sin yourselves into greater troubles, as Saul did; and by endeavoring to sin yourselves from under outward troubles—you will sin yourselves under inward troubles and distresses, which are the sorest and saddest of all troubles. Some there have been, who, by laboring to sin themselves out of their present sufferings, have sinned themselves under such horrors and terrors of conscience, so that they could neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep—but have been ready to lay violent hands upon themselves.

Cyprian speaks of those who, forsaking the faith to avoid sufferings, were given over to be possessed by evil spirits, and died fearfully. O man! you do not know what deadly sin, what deadly temptation, what deadly judgment, what deadly stroke—you may fall under—if you attempt to sin yourself out of troubles. What is it to take Venice—and then to be hanged at the gates thereof? It is better to be silent and mute under your afflictions, than by using sinful shifts to sin yourself under greater afflictions.

(4.) Fourthly, **Consider it is a very ignoble and unworthy thing to go to—to sin yourselves out of your troubles and straits.** It argues a poor, a low, a weak, a dastardly, and an effeminate spirit, to use base shifts to shuffle yourselves out of your troubles. Men of noble, courageous, and magnanimous spirits will disdain and scorn it. As you may see in the three Hebrew children, David, and those worthies, in that 11th of the Hebrews, of whom 'this world was not worthy.' Jerome writes of a brave woman, who, being upon the rack, bade her persecutors do their worst, for she was resolved to die rather than lie. And the prince of Conde, being taken prisoner by Charles the Ninth, king of France, and put to his choice whether he would go to a Catholic mass—or be put to death—or suffer perpetual imprisonment; his noble answer was, that by God's help he would never choose the first; and for either of the latter, he left to the king's pleasure and God's providence.

A soul truly noble will sooner part with all, than the peace of a good conscience. Thus blessed Hooper desired rather to be discharged of his church office, than yield to certain unbiblical ceremonies.

I have read of Marcus Arethusus, all eminent servant of the Lord in gospel-work, who, in the time of Constantine, had been the cause of overthrowing an idol temple; but Julian, coming to be emperor, commanded the people of that place to build it up again. All were ready so to do, only he refused it. Whereupon his own people, to whom he had preached, fell upon him, stripped off all his clothes, then abused his naked body, and gave it up to children and school-boys to be lanced with their penknives. And when all this would not change his mind, they tied him up, having his naked body poured all over with honey, that so he might be bitten and stung to death by flies and wasps, while baking under the sun! All this cruelty they exercised upon him, because he would not give anything towards the rebuilding of that idol temple! No, they went so far, that if he would but give one halfpenny towards the temple, they would release him. But he refused it with a noble Christian disdain, though the advancing of an halfpenny might have saved his life. And in so doing, he did but live up to that noble principle that most commend—but few practice, that is—that Christians must choose rather to suffer the worst of torments, than commit the least of sins, whereby God should be dishonored, his name blasphemed, true religion reproached, profession scorned, weak saints discouraged, men's consciences wounded, and their souls endangered.

Now tell me, Christians, is it not better to be silent and mute under your sorest trials and troubles, than to sin, and shift yourselves out of them—and so proclaim to all the world, that you are people of very low, poor, and ignoble spirits? But

(5) Fifthly, **Consider—sinful shifts and means, God has always cursed and blasted.** Achan's golden wedge was but a wedge to cleave him—and his garments a shroud to shroud him. Ahab purchases a vineyard with the blood of the owner—but presently it was watered with his own blood, according to the word of the Lord. Gehazi must needs have the silver and two changes of clothing—obtained with a lie, I say with a lie. Well! he has them, and he has with them a leprosy which cleaved to him and his children forever, 2Ki 5:22-27. With those very hands that Judas took money to betray his master—with those very hands he fitted a noose to hang himself. The rich and wretched glutton fared sumptuously, and lived opulently every day—but the next news you hear of him, is of his being in hell, crying out for a single drop of water, who, when he was on earth, would not give a crumb.

The coal that the eagle carried from the altar to her nest, set all on fire. Crassus did not long enjoy the fruit of his covetousness, for the Parthians capturing him—poured melted gold down his throat. Ah! Christians, Christians, is it not far better to sit quiet and silent under your afflictions, than to use such sinful shifts and means which God will certainly blast and curse? But,

(6.) Sixthly and lastly, Consider this, that **your very attempting to sin and shift yourselves out of troubles and afflictions, will cost you dearly.** It will cost you many prayers and tears, many sighs, many groans, many gripes, many terrors, and many horrors. Peter, by attempting to sin himself out of trouble, sins himself into a sea of sorrows—Mat 26:75, 'He went forth and wept bitterly.'

Clement observes, that every time he heard a cock crow, he would fall upon his knees and weep bitterly. Others say, that his face was furrowed with continual tears. Were Abraham, David, Jacob, and Jonah now alive, they would tell you, that they have found this to be a truth in their own experience. Ah! Christians, it is far better to be quiet and silent under your sufferings, than to pay so dear for attempting to sin and shift yourselves out of your sufferings. A man will not buy gold too dear, and why then should he buy himself out of troubles at too dear a rate?

But now I shall come to that use that I intend to stand most upon, and that is, a use of **EXHORTATION**. Seeing it is the great duty and concernment of Christians to be mute and silent under the greatest afflictions, the saddest providence, and sharpest trials which they meet with in this world—oh that I could prevail with you, Christians, to mind this great duty, and to live up and live out this necessary truth. I now propound **twelve considerations, to engage your souls to be mute and silent under your greatest troubles and your saddest trials**.

1. **Consider first, the greatness, sovereignty, majesty, and dignity of God—and let that move you to silence**, Jer 10:7; Jer 5:22. "Come and see the works of the Lord, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire. Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." Psa 46:8-10. Who can cast his eye upon the greatness of God, the majesty of God, and not sit still before him? Zep 1:7, 'Hold your peace at the presence of the Lord God.' Oh, chatter not, murmur not, fret not—but stand mute before him! Shall the child be hushed before his father, the servant before the master, the subject before his prince, and the guilty person before the judge, when he majestically rises off his judgment seat, and composes his countenance into an aspect of terror and severity, that his sentence may fall upon the offender with the greater dread? Shall the sheep be hushed before the wolf, birds before the hawk, and all the beasts of the field before the lion? And shall not we be hushed and quiet before him, who is the Lion of the tribe of Judah? Rev 5:5. God is mighty in power, and mighty in counsel, and mighty in working, and mighty in punishing; therefore be silent before him.

It appears that God is a mighty God, by the epithet that is added unto *El*, which is *Gibbon*—importing that he is a God of prevailing might. In Daniel he is called El Elim—the mighty of mighties. Moses magnifying of his might, says, 'Who is like unto you among the gods?' Now certainly this epithet should be a mighty motive to work souls to that which Habakkuk persuaded to—Hab 2:20, 'The Lord is in his holy temple—let all the earth keep silence before him.' Upon this very consideration Moses commands Israel to hold their peace, Exo 14:13-14.

It is reported of Augustus the emperor, and likewise of Tamerlane that warlike Scythian, that in their eyes sat such a rare majesty, that many in talking with them, and often beholding of them, have become speechless. O my brethren, shall not the brightness and splendor of the majesty of the great God, whose sparkling glory and majesty dazzles the eyes of angels, and makes those princes of glory stand mute before him—move you much more to silence, to hold your peace, and lay your hands upon your mouths. Surely yes! But,

2. Secondly, **Consider, That all your afflictions, troubles, and trials shall work for your good**—Rom 8:28, 'And we know that all things shall work together for good to those who love God.' Why then should you fret, fling, fume—seeing God designs you good in all? The bee sucks sweet honey out of the bitterest herbs; so God will by afflictions teach his children to suck sweet knowledge, sweet obedience, and sweet experiences, sweet humility—out of all the bitter afflictions and trials he exercises them with. That **scouring** and **rubbing**, which frets others, shall make them shine the brighter; and that **weight** which keeps others crushed, shall but make them, like the palm tree, grow better and higher; and that **hammer** which knocks others all in pieces, shall but knock them the nearer to Christ, the corner stone.

Stars shine brightest in the darkest night; torches give the best light when beaten; grapes yield most wine when most pressed; spices smell sweetest when pounded; vines are the better for bleeding; gold looks the brighter for scouring; juniper smells sweetest in the fire; camomile, the more you tread it the more you spread it; the salamander lives best in the fire; the Jews were best, when most afflicted; the Athenians would never mend, until they were in mourning. Christ's cross, says Luther, is no letter in the book, and yet, says he, it has taught me more than all the letters in the book. Afflictions are the saints' best benefactors to heavenly affections. Where afflictions hang heaviest, corruptions hang loosest. And grace that is hid in nature, as sweet water in rose leaves, is then most fragrant when the fire of affliction is put under to distill it out. Grace shines the brighter for scouring, and is most glorious when it is most clouded.

Pliny in his Natural History writes of certain trees growing in the Red Sea, which being battered by the roughness of the waves, stand like a rock, immovable. In the sea of afflictions, God will make his people stand like a rock; they shall be immovable and invincible, and the more the waves of afflictions beat upon them, the better they shall be, the more they shall thrive in grace and godliness.

Now how should this engage Christians to be mute and silent under all their troubles and trials in this world, considering that they shall all work for their good! God chastises our carcasses—to heal our consciences; he afflicts our bodies—to save our souls; he gives us gall and wormwood here—that the pleasures which are at his right hand may be more sweet hereafter; here he lays us upon a bed of thorns, that we may look and long more for that easy bed of down—his bosom in heaven.

As there is a curse wrapped up in the best things he gives the wicked—so there is a blessing wrapped up in the worst things he brings upon his own, Psa 25:10, Deu 26:16. As there is a curse wrapped up in a wicked man's health—so there is a blessing wrapped up in a godly man's sickness; as there is a curse wrapped up in a wicked man's strength—so there is a blessing wrapped up in a godly man's weakness; as there is a curse wrapped up in a wicked man's wealth—so there is a blessing wrapped up in a godly man's wants; as there is a curse wrapped up in a wicked man's honor—so there is a blessing wrapped up in a godly man's reproach; as there is a curse wrapped up in all a wicked man's mercies—so there is a blessing wrapped up in all a godly man's crosses, losses, and changes! Why then should he not sit mute and silent before the Lord? But,

3. Thirdly, **Consider, That a holy silence in that excellent precious grace—which lends a hand of support to every grace**, Rom 15:4. Silence is the helper of all other virtues; it lends a hand to faith, a hand to hope, a hand to love, a hand to humility, a hand to self-denial etc. A holy silence has its influences upon all other graces that are in the soul; it causes the rosebuds of grace to blossom and bud forth. Silence is a grace that keeps a man gracious in all conditions. In every condition silence is a Christian's right hand; in **prosperity**, it bears the soul up under all the envy, hatred, malice, and censures of the world; in **adversity**, it bears the soul up under all the neglect, scorn, and contempt that a Christian meets with in the world. It makes every bitter, sweet; every burden, light; and every yoke, easy. And this the very heathen seemed to intimate in placing the image of Angeronia with the mouth bound, upon the altar of Volupia to show that silence under sufferings was the ready way to attain true comfort, and make every bitter, sweet. No man honors God, nor no man justifies God at so high a rate—as he who lays his hand upon his mouth, when the rod of God is upon his back. But,

4. Fourthly, To move you to silence under your sorest and your sharpest trials, **consider, That you have deserved greater and heavier afflictions then those you are under**, Lam 3:39; Mic 7:7-9. Has God taken away one mercy? You have deserved to be stripped of all. Has he taken away the delight of your eyes? He might have taken away the delight of your soul. Are you under outward wants? You have deserved to be under outward and inward together. Are you cast upon a sick bed? You have deserved a bed in hell. Are you under that ache and that pain? You have deserved to be under all aches and pains at once. Has God chastised you with whips? You have deserved to be chastised with scorpions, 1Ki 12:14. Are you fallen from the highest pinnacle of honor to be the scorn and contempt of men? You have deserved to be scorned and condemned by God and angels. Are you under a severe whipping? You have deserved an utter damning. Ah Christian! let but your eyes be fixed upon your demerits, and your hands will be quickly upon your mouths; whatever is less than a final separation from God, whatever is less than hell, is mercy; and therefore you have cause to be silent under the sharpest dealings of God with you. But,

5. Fifthly, **Consider, a quiet silent spirit is of great esteem with God.** God sets the greatest value upon people of a quiet spirit—1Pe 3:4. 'your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.' A quiet spirit is a spark of the divine nature, it is a ray, a beam of glory; it is a heaven-born spirit. No man is born with a holy silence in his heart, as he is born with a tongue in his mouth. This is a flower of paradise; it is a precious gem which God makes very great estimate of. A quiet spirit speaks a man most like to God; it capacitates a man for communion with God; it renders a man most serviceable to God; and it obliges a man to most accurate walking with God. A meek and quiet spirit is an incorruptible ornament, much more valuable than gold.

(1.) First, There is a **mutual** quietness, which proceeds from a good temper and constitution of body.

(2.) Secondly, There is a **moral** quietness, which proceeds from good education and breeding, which flows from good injunctions, instructions, and examples.

(3.) Thirdly, There is an **artificial** quietness; some have an art to imprison their passions, and to lay a *law of restraint* upon their anger and wrath, when they are all in a flame within—as you may see in Cain, Esau, Absalom, and Joab, who for a time cast a thick cloak over their malice, when their hearts were set on fire of hell. So Domitian would seem to love them best, whom he willed least should live.

(4.) Fourthly, There is a **gracious** quietness, which is of the Spirit's infusion, Gal. 5. Now this quietness of spirit, this spiritual frame of heart, is of great price in the sight of God. God values it above the world, and therefore who would not covet it more than the world, yes, more than life itself? Certainly the great God sets a great price upon nothing but that which is of an invaluable price; what stretching, struggling, and striving is there for those things that the great ones of the earth do highly prize! Ah! what stretching of wits, interests, and consciences is there this day, to gain and hold up that which justice will cast down! How much better would it be, if all people would in good earnest struggle and strive, even as for life, after a quiet and silent spirit, which the great and glorious God sets so great a price upon! This is a pearl of greatest price, and happy is he who purchases it, though it were with the loss of all. But,

6. Sixthly, **Consider, That if you do not sit silent and quiet under your greatest troubles and your sorest trials, you will be found fighters against your own prayers.** How often have you prayed that the will of God may be done, yes, that it may be done on the earth, as the angels, those glistering courtiers, those princes of glory, do it now in heaven! Mat 6:10. When troubles and afflictions come upon you, the will of God is done, his will is accomplished. Why then should you fret, fling, and fume, and not rather quietly lie down in his will—whose will is a perfect will, a just and righteous will, a wise will, an overruling will, an infinite will, a sovereign will, a holy will, an immutable will, an uncontrollable will, an omnipotent will, and an eternal will? Certainly you will but add affliction to affliction, lay fighting against your own prayers—by vexing and fretting yourselves when the will of God is done.

It is sad to see a man to fight against his friends; it is sadder to see him fight against his relations; it is saddest of all to see him fight against his prayers. And yet this every Christian does, who murmurs and mutters when the rod of God is upon him. Some there be that pray against their prayers, as Augustine, who prayed for patience with a proviso—Lord! give me patience—but not yet! And some there are who fight against their prayers, as those who pray that the will of God may be done, and yet when his will is done upon them, they are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest—they are still fretting against the Lord. Ah, Christians! have you not sins to fight against, and temptations to fight against, and a devil to fight against, yes, a whole world to fight against? Why then should you be found fighting against your own prayers? But,

7. Seventhly, **Consider, A holy silence under the heaviest burdens, the greatest afflictions, the saddest providences and changes—will make all tolerable and easy to a Christian.** The silent soul can hear a burden—without a burden. Those burdens and troubles that will break a froward man's back—will not so much as break a silent man's sleep. Those afflictions which lie as heavy weights upon a murmurer—will lie as light as a feather upon a mute Christian, Mic 7:7-10, Psa 92:1, Psa 92:6. That bed of sorrow, which is as a bed of thorns to a fretful soul—will be as a bed of down to a silent soul. A holy silence unstings every affliction; it takes off the weight of every burden; it adds sweet to every bitter; it changes dark nights into sunshiny days, and terrible storms into desirable calms. **The smallest sufferings will easily vanquish an unquiet spirit—but a quiet spirit will as easily triumph over the greatest sufferings.** As little mercies are great mercies; so great sufferings are but little sufferings—in the eye of a silent soul. The silent soul never complains that his affliction is too great, his burden too heavy, his cross too weighty, his sufferings too many; silence makes him victorious over all. Therefore, as ever you would have heavy afflictions light, and be able to bear a burden without a burden—labor as for life after this holy silence!

8. Eighthly, **Consider that a holy silence under afflictions will be your best armor against those temptations, which afflictions may expose you to.** Times of afflictions often prove times of great temptations, and therefore afflictions are called temptations—Jas 1:12, 'Blessed is the man which endures temptations, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life,' etc. The Greek word *peirasmon*, is to be understood of temptations of probation, of afflicting temptations, and not of temptations of suggestion, of seduction; for they are not to be endured—but resisted and abhorred, Jas 4:7, 1Pe 5:9. Now, affliction is called temptation,

(1.) Because, as temptation tries what metal a Christian is made of, so do afflictions.

(2.) Because, as Satan usually has a great hand in all the temptations that come upon us—so he has a great hand in all the afflictions which befall us; as you see in that great instance of Job.

(3.) Because, as temptations drive men to God, 2Co 12:7-8, so do afflictions, Isa 26:16, Hos 5:15.

(4.) But mainly because Satan chooses times of afflictions as the fittest seasons for his temptations. When Job was severely afflicted in his estate, children, wife, life—then Satan lets fly, and makes his fiercest assaults upon him. Now, Satan tempts him to entertain hard thoughts of God; to distrust, to impatience, to murmuring and muttering. As when Israel was feeble, faint, and weary—Amalek assaulted them, and smote them Deu 25:17-18; so when Christians are most afflicted, then usually they are most tempted.

Luther found this by experience when he said, I am without set upon by all the world, and within by the devil and all his demons. Satan is a cowardly and loves to strike us and trample upon us when afflictions have cast us down. When besieged towns, cities, and castles are in greatest straits and troubles—then the besiegers make their fiercest assaults; so when Christians are under the greatest straits and trials—then Satan assaults them most, like a roaring lion. Now, silence under afflictions is the best antidote and preservative against all those temptations which afflictions lay us open to. Silence in afflictions is a Christian's impregnable armor; it is that shield that no spear or dart of temptation can pierce. While a Christian lies silently under the rod, he is safe. Satan may tempt him—but he will not conquer him; he may assault him—but he cannot vanquish him. Satan may entice him to use sinful shifts to shift himself out of trouble—but he will choose rather to die, yes, die, in trouble, than get out upon Satan's terms. But,

9. Ninthly, **Consider, That holy silence under afflictions and trials will give a man a quiet and peaceable possession of his own soul**—'In patience possess your souls', Luk 21:19. Now, next to the possession of God, the possession of a man's own soul is the greatest mercy in this world. A man may possess honors, and riches, and dear relations and the favor and assistance of friends under his trials—but he will never come to a possession of his own soul under his troubles until he comes to be silent, and to lay his hand upon his mouth. Now what are all earthly possessions to the possession of a man's own soul? He who possesses himself possesses all; he who possesses not himself possesses nothing at all. He possesses not the use, the sweet, the comfort, the good, the blessing of anything he enjoys—who enjoys not himself. That man who is not master of himself—he is a master of nothing. Holy silence gives a man the greatest mastery over his own spirit; and mastery over a man's own spirit is the greatest mastery in the world, Pro 16:32.

The Egyptian goddess they paint upon a rock standing in the sea, where the waves come roaring and dashing upon her, with this motto—'Storms shall not move me'. A holy silence will give a man such a quiet possession of his own soul, that all the storms of afflictions shall not move him; it will make him stand like a rock in a sea of troubles. Let a man but quietly possess himself, and troubles will never trouble him. But,

10. Tenthly, **Consider the commands and instructions that God in his word has laid upon you to be silent, to be mute and quiet, under all the troubles, trials, and changes that have or may pass upon you**—"Let all people be silent before the Lord, for He is coming from His holy dwelling." Zechariah 2:13. Isaiah 51:1, 'Keep silence before me, O islands.' Hab. 2:20, 'The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.' Amos 5:13, 'Therefore, the wise person will keep silent at such a time, for the days are evil.' Psalm 44:10, 'Be still, and know that I am God.' Psalm 4:4, 'Commune with your heart, and be still.' Exod. 14:13, 'Stand still, and see the salvation of God.' Job 37:14, 'Hearken unto this, O Job; stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God.'

It is a dangerous thing for us to neglect one of his commands, who by another is able to command us into nothing, or into hell at pleasure. To act or run cross to God's express command, though under pretense of revelation from God, is as much as a man's life is worth, as you may see in that sad story, 1 Kings 13:24, etc. Divine commands must he put in speedy execution, without denying or delaying, without debating or disputing the difficulties that may attend our subjection to them. God's commands are spiritual, holy, just, and good; and therefore to be obeyed without muttering or murmurings. Divine commands are backed with the strongest reason, and attended with the highest encouragements.

Shall the servant readily obey the commands of his master, the subject the commands of his prince, the soldier the commands of his general, the child the commands of his father, the wife the commands of her husband—and shall not a Christian as readily obey the commands of his Christ? No, shall vain men readily and willingly obey the sinful and senseless commands of men, and shall not we be willing to obey the commands of God? "Now Absalom commanded his young men 'Watch Amnon until he is in a good mood from the wine. When I order you to strike Amnon, then kill him. Don't be afraid. Am I not the one who has commanded you? Be strong and courageous!' So Absalom's young men did to Amnon just as Absalom had commanded." 2 Samuel 13:28-29 They made no bones of obeying the bloody commands of Absalom, against all law, reason, and religion.

I have read of one Johannes Abbas who willingly fetched water from two miles away every day for a whole year, to pour upon a dry stick—upon the bare command of his priest.

I have also read of the old kings of Peru, that they were used to use a tassel or fringe made of red wool, which they wore upon their heads, and when they sent any governor to rule as viceroy in any part of their country, they delivered unto him one of the threads of the tassel, and for one of those simple threads he was as much obeyed as if he had been the king himself. Now, shall one single thread be more forcible to draw infidels to obedience, than all those golden commands, last cited, shall be of force to draw you to be quiet and silent under the troubles and changes you meet with in this world? The Lord forbid!

Shall carnal and wicked people be so ready and willing to comply with the bloody, and senseless, and superstitious commands of their superiors? And shall not Christians be more ready and willing to comply with the commands of the great God, whose commands are all just and equal, and whose will is the perfect rule of righteousness. The chief reason of obedience is the authority of the Lord—not the utility of the servant. Ah, Christians! when your hearts begin to fret and fume under the smarting rod, charge one of those commands last cited upon your hearts; and if they mutter, charge another of those commands upon your hearts; and if after this, they vex and murmur, charge another of those commands upon your hearts; and never leave charging and rubbing those commands one after another upon your hearts, until you are brought to lay your hands upon your mouths, and to sit silent before the Lord under your greatest straits and your sorest trials.

11. Eleventhly, **Consider, That mercy is nearest, deliverance and salvation is at hand—when a Christian stands still, when he sits quiet and silent under his greatest troubles and his sorest trials.** In Exodus 14, they were in very great straits. Pharaoh with a mighty army was behind then, the Red Sea before them, mountains on each side of them and no visible means to deliver them. But now they stand still to see the salvation of the Lord, ver. 13, and within a few hours their enemies are destroyed, and they are gloriously delivered, ver. 24, et seq.

Psalm 39:9, David is dumb, he sits mute under his sharp afflictions; but if you look to the second and third verses of the fortieth Psalm, you shall find mercy draw near to him and work salvation for him. 'I waited patiently for the Lord, and He turned to me and heard my cry for help. He brought me up from a desolate pit, out of the muddy clay, and set my feet on a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God.' Psalm 40:1-3.

And so when Absalom has made a great conspiracy against him, and his subjects fell off from him and he was forced to flee for his life, David's spirit was quiet and calm. "Then the king instructed Zadok, 'Return the ark of God to the city. If I find favor in the Lord's eyes, He will bring me back and allow me to see both it and its dwelling place. However, if He should say, 'I do not delight in you,' then here I am—He can do with me whatever pleases Him." 2 Samuel 15:25-26.

And the same calmness and quietness of spirit was upon him when Shimei bitterly cursed him, and railed upon him, 2 Samuel 16:5-14; and within a few days, as you may see in the two following chapters, the conspirators are destroyed, and David's throne more firmly established. Mercy is always nearest when a man can in quietness possess his own soul. Salvation is at hand when a Christian comes to lay his hand upon his mouth. Mercy will be upon the wing, loving-kindness will ride quickly to put a period to that man's troubles, who sits silent in the day of his sorrows and sufferings. Ah, Christians! as you would have mercy near, as you would see to the end of your afflictions, as you would have deliverance come flying upon the wings of the wind—sit mute and silent under all your troubles. As wine was then nearest when the water-pots were filled with water; even to the brim; so when the heart is fullest of quietness and calmness, then is the wine of mercy, the wine of deliverance, nearest.

12. The twelfth and last motive to work you to silence under your greatest trials is this, **seriously consider the heinous and dangerous nature of murmuring.** Now that you may, let me propose these following particulars to your most sober consideration.

(1.) First, **Consider that murmuring speaks out many a root of bitterness to be strong in your soul**, Heb. 3:12. Murmuring speaks out sin in its power, and corruption upon its throne, Heb. 12:1. As holy silence argues true grace, much grace, yes, grace in its strength and in its lively vigor; so murmuring, muttering under the hand of God, argues much sin, yes, a heart full of sin; it speaks out a heart full of self-love, Exod. 15:24; 16:7, 8; and full of slavish fears, Numb. 13:32, 33; 14:1-3; and full of ignorance, John 6:41, 42; and full of pride and unbelief, Psalm 106—'yes, they despised the pleasant land,'—there is their pride. 'They believed not in his word'—there is their unbelief. What follows? They murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of God. They were sick of the sullens, and preferred Egypt before Canaan, a wilderness before a paradise. As in the first chaos there were the seeds of all creatures, so in the murmurer's heart there is not only the seeds of all sin—but a lively operation of all sin. Sin is become mighty in the hearts of murmurers, and none but an almighty God can root it out. Those roots of bitterness have so spread and strengthened themselves in the hearts of murmurers, that everlasting strength must put in, or they will be undone forever, Isaiah 26:4. But,

(2.) Secondly, **consider, That the Holy Spirit has set a brand of infamy upon murmurers.** He has stigmatized them as ungodly people—Jude 16, 16, 'To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.' But who are these ungodly sinners? 'They are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts,' etc.' ver. 16. When Christ comes to execute judgment upon ungodly ones, murmurers shall be set in the front, they shall experience the fierceness of his wrath and the greatness of his wrath. The front, you know, is first assaulted, and most strongly assaulted. Christ will bend all his power and strength against murmurers; his little finger shell be heavier upon them, than his loins shall be upon others, 1 Kings 12:11, 14. Other sinners shall be chastised with whips—but ungodly murmurers shall be chastised with scorpions. If you can rejoice in that black character of ungodly sinners, be murmurers still; if not, cease from murmurings.

Where murmuring is in its reign, in its dominion—there you may speak and write that person as ungodly. Let murmurers make what profession they will of godliness, yet if murmuring keeps the throne in their hearts—Christ will deal with them at last as ungodly sinners. A man may be denominated ungodly, as well from his murmuring, if he lives under the dominion of it, as from his drunkenness, swearing, whoring, lying, stealing, etc. A murmurer is an ungodly man, he is an ungodlike nan; no man on earth more unlike to God than the murmurer; and therefore no wonder if when Christ comes to execute judgment, he deals so severely and terribly with him.

In the wars of Tamberlain, one having found a great pot of gold, that was hid in the earth, he brought it to Tamberlain, who asked whether it had his father's stamp upon it? But when he saw that it had not his father's stamp—but the Roman stamp upon it, he would not receive it—but cast it away. The Lord Jesus, when he shall come with all his saints to execute judgment, Oh! he will not receive murmurers; no, he will cast them away forever, because they have not his Father's stamp upon them. Ah, souls! souls! as you would not go up and down this world with a badge of ungodliness upon you—take heed of murmuring.

(3). Thirdly, **Consider that murmuring is the mother-sin**; it is the mother of harlots, the mother of all abominations; a sin that breeds many other sins, that is, disobedience, contempt, ingratitude, impatience, distrust, rebellion, cursing, carnality. Yes, it charges God with folly, yes, with blasphemy, Num. 16:41, 17:10, Judges 17:2. The language of a murmuring, a muttering soul is this—Surely God might have done this sooner, and that wiser, and the other thing better, etc. As the river Nilus brings forth many crocodiles; and the scorpion brings forth many serpents at one birth, so murmuring is a sin that breeds and brings forth many sins at once. Murmuring is like the monster hydra; cut off one head, and many will rise up in its place. Oh! therefore, bend all your strength against this mother-sin.

As the king of Syria said to his captains, 'Fight neither with small nor great—but only with the king of Israel', 1 Kings 22:31, so say I, Fight not so much against this sin or that—but fight against your murmuring, which is a mother-sin. Make use of all your Christian armor, make use of all the ammunition of heaven, to destroy the mother, and in destroying of her, you will destroy the daughters! Eph. 6:10, 11. When Goliath was slain, the Philistines fled. When a general in an army is cut off, the common soldiers are easily and quickly routed and destroyed. So, destroy but murmuring, and you will quickly destroy disobedience, ingratitude, impatience, distrust, etc. Oh, kill this mother-sin—that it may never kill your soul.

I have read of Sennacherib, that after his army was destroyed by an angel, Isaiah 37, and he returned home to his own country, he inquired of one—what he thought the reason might be why God so favored the Jews? He answered that there was one Abraham, their father, that was willing to sacrifice his son to death at the command of God, and that ever since that time God favored that people. Well, said Sennacherib, if that be so, I have two sons, and I will sacrifice them both to death, if that will procure their God to favor me; which, when his two sons heard, they, as the story goes, slew their father, Isaiah 37:38, choosing rather to kill than to be killed. So do you choose rather to kill this mother-sin than to be killed by it, or by any of those vipers that are brought forth by it, Psalm 137:8, 9.

(4.) Fourthly, **Consider that murmuring is a God-provoking sin**; it is a sin which provokes God not only to afflict—but also to destroy a people—Num. 14:27-29, 'How long shall I bear with this evil congregation which murmurs against me? I have heard the murmuring of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. Say unto them, As truly as I live, says the Lord, as you have spoken in my ears, so will I do to you. In this desert your bodies will fall—every one of you twenty years old or more who was counted in the census and who has grumbled against me.' 1 Cor. 10:10, 'Neither murmur you, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed by the destroyer.' All our murmurings do but provoke the Lord to strike us and destroy us.

I have read of Caesar, that, having prepared a great feast for his nobles and friends, it so fell out that the day appointed was extreme bad weather, that nothing could be done to the honor of their meeting; whereupon he was so displeased and enraged, that he commanded all those who had bows to shoot up their arrows at Jupiter, their chief god, as in defiance of him for that rainy weather; which, when they did, their arrows fell short of heaven, and fell upon their own heads, so that many of them were very severely wounded. So all our mutterings and murmurings, which are as so many arrows shot at God himself, they will return upon our heads and hearts; they reach not him—but they will hit us; they hurt not him—but they will wound us—therefore it is better to be mute than to murmur; it is dangerous to provoke a consuming fire! Heb. 12:29.

(5.) Fifthly, **Consider, That murmuring is the devil's image, sin and punishment.** Satan is still a-murmuring; he murmurs at every mercy that God bestows, at every drop of grace he gives, Job 1:8, 9; he murmurs at every sin he pardons, and at every soul he saves. A soul cannot have a good look from heaven, nor hear a good word from heaven, nor receive a love-letter from heaven—but Satan murmurs at it! He murmurs and mutters at every act of pitying grace, and at every act of preventing grace, and at every act of supporting grace, and at every act of strengthening grace, and at every act of comforting grace—which God exercises towards poor souls. He murmurs at every sip, at every drop, at every crumb of mercy that God bestows.

Cyprian, Aquinas, and others conceive that the cause of Satan's banishment from leaven was his grieving and murmuring at the dignity of man, whom he beheld made after God's own image, insomuch that he would relinquish his own glory, to divest so noble a creature of perfection, and rather lie in hell himself, than see Adam placed in paradise. But certainly, after his fall, murmuring and envy at man's innocence and felicity put him upon attempting to plunge man into the bottomless gulf of sin and misery. Satan, knowing himself to be damned, and lost forever, would needs try all ways how to make happy man eternally unhappy.

Mr. Howell tells it as a strange thing, that a serpent was found in the heart of an Englishman when he was dead; but, alas! this old serpent was by sad experience found to have too much power in the heart of Adam while alive, and while in the height of all his glory and excellency. Murmuring is the first-born of the devil; and nothing renders a man more like the devil, than murmuring. Constantine's sons did not more resemble their father, nor Aristotle's scholars their master, nor Alexander's soldiers their general—than murmurers resemble Satan.

And as murmuring is Satan's sin, so it is his punishment. God has given him up to a murmuring spirit; nothing pleases him; all things go against him; he is perpetually a-muttering and murmuring at people or things. Now, oh what a dreadful thing is it to bear Satan's image upon us, and to be given up to be the devil's punishment! It were better not to be, than thus to be given up! Therefore cease from murmuring, and sit mute under your sorest trials! But,

(6.) Sixthly, **Consider, That murmuring is a mercy-embittering sin, an mercy-souring sin**; as put the sweetest things into a sour vessel, it sours them; or put them into a bitter vessel, and it embitters them. Murmuring puts gall and wormwood into every cup of mercy that God gives into our hands. As holy silence gives a sweet taste, a delightful relish, to all a man's mercies—so murmuring embitters all. The murmurer can taste no sweetness in his sweetest morsels; every mercy, every morsel, tastes like the white of an egg to him, Job 6:6. This mercy, says the murmurer, is not very tasty; that mercy is not wholesome; here is a mercy lacks salt; and there is a mercy needs sauce. A murmurer can taste no sweet, can feel no comfort; he can take no delight in any mercy he enjoys. The murmurer writes *marah*, that is, *bitterness*, upon all his mercies; and he reads and tastes bitterness in all his mercies. All the murmurer's grapes are grapes of gall, and all their clusters are bitter, Deut. 32:23. As to 'the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet', Prov. 27:7, so to the murmuring soul every sweet thing is bitter. The mute Christian can suck sweetness from every breast of mercy—but the murmurer cries out, 'Oh it is bitter! Oh these breasts of mercy are dry!'

(7.) Seventhly, **Consider, That murmuring is a mercy-destroying sin, a mercy-murdering sin.** Murmuring cuts the throat of mercy; it stabs all our mercies at the heart; it sets all a man's mercies a-bleeding about him at once—Num. 14:30, 'Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home, except Caleb and Joshua.' God promises them that they would possess the holy land upon the condition of their obedience. This condition they broke; and therefore God was faithful, though he cut them off in the wilderness, and kept them out of Canaan, Deut. 31:16, 17. But what is the sin that provokes the Lord to bar them out of the land of promise—and to cut them off from all those mercies which they enjoyed which entered into the holy land? Why, it was their murmuring! as you may see in Numbers 14:1-3, 26-29. As you love your mercies, as you would have the sweet of your mercies, and as you would enjoy the life of your mercies—take heed of murmuring!

Murmuring will bring a consumption upon your mercies; it is a worm that will make all your mercies to wither. There are some who murmur their mercies into the grave. As you would have your mercies always fresh and green, smiling and thriving, as you would have your mercies to bed and board with you, to rise up and lie down with you, and in all conditions to attend you—murmur not, murmur not! The mute Christian's mercies are most sweet and most long-lived; the murmurer's mercies, like Jonah's gourd, will quickly wither. Murmuring has cut the throat of national mercies, of domestic mercies, and of personal mercies; and therefore, oh how should men fly from it as from a serpent! as from the avenger of blood, yes, as from hell itself!

(8.) Eighthly, **Consider, That murmuring unfits the soul for duty**, Exod. 6:7-10. A murmurer can neither hear to profit, nor pray to profit, nor read to profit, nor meditate to profit. The murmurer is neither fit to do good, nor receive good. Murmuring unfits the soul for doings of duties; it unfits the soul for delighting in duties; it unfits the soul for communion with God in duties. Murmuring fills the soul with cares, fears, distractions, vexations—all which unfits a man for duty 1 Cor. 7:33-35. As a holy quietness and calmness of spirit prompts a man to duty, as it makes every duty easy and pleasant to the soul Prov. 3:17; so it is murmuring which unhinges the soul, and indisposes the soul—so that it takes off the chariot wheels of the soul, that the soul cannot look up to God, nor do for God, nor receive from God, nor wait on God, nor walk with God, nor act faith upon God, etc.' Psalm 90:12. Oh! therefore, as ever you would be in a blessed preparedness, and a blessed fittedness for duty—take heed of murmuring, and sit mute and silent under the afflicting hand of God, Isaiah 26:9-11.

(9.) Ninthly, **Consider, That murmuring unmans a man**; it strips him of his reason and understanding; it makes him call evil good, and good evil; it puts light for darkness and darkness for light, bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter; it calls saviors destroyers, and deliverers murderers Isaiah 5:18-20, as you see in the murmuring Israelites, Murmuring uncrowns a man. The murmurer may say, 'My crown is fallen from my head', Lam. 5:16. Murmuring strips a man of all his glory; it spoils all his excellency; it destroys the nobility of man; it speaks him out to be a base ignoble creature. Murmuring clouds a man's understanding; it perverts the judgment, it puts out the eye of reason, stupefies his conscience; it sours the heart, disorders the will, and distempers the affections; it be-beasts a man, yes, it sets him below the beasts; for he were better be a beast, than be like a beast.

The murmurer is the hieroglyphic of folly; he is a comprehensive vanity; he is a man and no man; he is sottish and senseless—he neither understands God nor himself nor anything as he should; he is the man that must be sent to school, to learn from the beasts of the field, and the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the earth—how to cease from murmuring, and how to be mute, Isaiah 3:8, Jer. 7:6. Ah! sirs, as you would have the name, the honor, the reputation of being men, I say men—Take heed of murmuring, and sit silent before the Lord!

(10.) Tenthly, **Murmuring is a time-destroying sin.** Ah! the precious time that is buried in the grave of murmuring? When the murmurer should be a-praying, he is a-murmuring against the Lord; when he should be a-hearing, he is a-murmuring against the divine providences; when he should be a-reading, he is a-murmuring against instruments. The murmurer spends much precious time in musing; in musing how to get out of such a trouble, how to get off such a yoke, how to be rid of such a burden, how to revenge himself for such a wrong, how to supplant such a person, how to reproach those that are above him, and how to affront those that are below him; and a thousand other ways murmurers have to expend that precious time that some would redeem with a world; as Queen Elizabeth on her deathbed cried out, 'Time, time, a world of wealth for an inch of time!'

The murmurer lavishly and profusely trifles away that precious time, which is his greatest interest in this world to redeem, Eph. 5:16. Every day, every hour in the day, is a talent of time, and God expects the improvement of it, and will charge the non-improvement of it upon you at last, Rev. 2:21, 25; 1 Peter 4:2. Caesar observing some ladies in Rome to spend much of their time in making much of little dogs and monkeys, asked them, Whether the women in that country had no children to make much of? Ah! murmurers, murmurers, you who by your murmuring, trifle away so many godly hours and seasons of mercy—have you no God to honor? have you no Christ to believe in? have you no hearts to change, no sins to be pardoned, no souls to save, no hell to escape, no heaven to seek after? Oh! If you have, why do you spend so much of your precious time in murmuring against God, against men, against this or that thing? **Eternity rides upon the back of time.** This is the moment—if it be well improved, you are made forever; if not, you are undone forever.

I have read of Archias a Lacedaemonian, that while he was rioting and quaffing in the midst of his cups, one delivers him a letter, purposely to signify that there were some that lay in wait to take away his life, and withal desires him to read it immediately, because it was a serious business and matter of high concern to him. Oh, said he—I will think of serious things tomorrow; but that night he was slain! Ah! murmurer, cease from murmuring today, or else you may be forever undone by murmuring tomorrow. The old saying, 'now or never'—so say I, 'Now or never, now or never give over murmuring, and let it swallow up no more of your precious time!' What would not many a murmurer give for one of those days, yes, for one of those hours which he has trifled away in murmuring—when it is a day too late!

The Rabbis glory in this conceit, that a man has so many bones as there are letters in the Decalogue, and just so many joints as there are days in the year; to show that all our strength and time should be expended in God's service. Ah, murmurers, you will gain more by one day's faithful serving of God, than ever you have gained by murmuring against God. But,

(11.) Eleventhly, **Consider this, Christians, that of all men in the world, you have least cause, yes, no cause, to be murmuring and muttering under any dispensation that you meet with in this world.** Is not God your portion? Chrysostom propounds this question, Was Job miserable when he had lost all that God hall given him? and gives this answer, No, he had still the God who gave him all. Is not Christ your treasure? Is not heaven your inheritance? and will you murmur? Have you not much in hand, and more in hope? Have you not much in possession—but much more reserved in heaven—and will you murmur? Has not God given you a changed heart, a renewed nature, and a sanctified soul—and will you murmur? Has he not given you himself to satisfy you, his Son to save you, his Spirit to lead you, his grace to adorn you, his covenant to assure you, his mercy to pardon you, his righteousness to clothe you—and will you murmur? Has he not made you a friend, a son, a brother, a bride, an heir—and will you murmur? Has not God often turned your water into wine, your brass into silver, and your silver into gold—and will you murmur? When you were dead, did not he quicken you; and when you were lost, did not he seek you; and when you were wounded, did not he heal you; and when you were falling, did not he support you; and when you were down, did not he raise you; and when you were staggering, did not he establish you; and when you were erring, did not he correct you; and when you were tempted, did not he support you; and when you went in dangers, did not he deliver you?—and will you murmur? What! you who are so highly advanced and exalted above many thousands in the world? Murmuring is a black garment, and it befits none so ill as saints.

(12.) Twelfthly, and lastly, **Consider that murmuring makes the life of man invisible miserable.** Every murmurer is his own executioner. Murmuring vexes the heart; it wears and tears the heart, it enrages and inflames the heart, it wounds and stabs the heart. Every murmurer is his own martyr, every murmurer is a murderer; he kills many at once, that is—his joy, his comfort, his peace, his rest, his soul. No man so inwardly miserable as the murmurer; no man has such inward gripes and griefs as he, such inward bitterness and heaviness as he, such inward contentions and combustions as he. Every murmurer is his own tormentor. Murmuring is a fire within that will burn up all, it is an earthquake within that will overturn all, it is a disease within that will infect all, it is a poison within that will prey upon all.

And thus I have done with those motives that may persuade us not to murmur nor mutter—but to be mute and silent under the greatest afflictions, the saddest providences and sharpest trials that we meet with in this world.

"Mute Christian under the Smarting Rod" or,
"The Silent Soul with Sovereign Antidotes"

by Thomas Brooks, 1659, London.

"I was silent; I would not open my mouth, for
You are the one who has done this!" Psalm 39:9

I shall now address myself to answer those OBJECTIONS, and to remove those impediments which hinder poor souls from being silent and mute under the afflicting hand of God.

Objection 1. Sir! **did I but know that I were afflicted in love, I would hold my peace under my affliction**, I would sit mute before the Lord; but oh! how shall I come to understand that these strokes are the strokes of love, that these wounds are the wounds of a friend? I answer:

1. First, **If your heart be drawn more out to the Lord by your afflictions, then the afflictions are in love.** If they are so sanctified as that they draw out your soul to love the Lord more, and to fear the Lord more, and to please the Lord more, and to cleave to the Lord more, and to wait on the Lord more, and to walk with the Lord more—then they are in love. Oh, then they are the wounds of a friend indeed! It is reported of the lioness, that she leaves her young whelps until they have almost killed themselves with roaring and yelling, and then at the last gasp, when they have almost spent themselves, she relieves them, and by this means they become more courageous; and so if the afflictions which are upon us do increase our courage, strengthen our patience, raise our faith, inflame our love, and enliven our hopes, certainly they are in love, and all our wounds are the wounds of a friend. But

2. Secondly, **If you are more careful and studious how to glorify God in the affliction, and how to be kept from sinning under the affliction, than how to yet out of the affliction, then certainly your affliction is in love**, Dan. 3. and 5:16,17, Heb. 11. Where God smites in love, there the soul makes it his study how to glorify God, and how to lift up God, and how to be a light and an honor to God. The daily language of such a soul under the rod is this—Lord! stand by me that I sin not, uphold me that I sin not, strengthen me that I sin not, John 7:7-10. He who will not sin to repair and make up his losses, though be knew assuredly that the committing of such a sin would make up all again, he may conclude that his affliction is in love.

I have read of a nobleman whose son and heir was supposed to be bewitched, and being advised to go to some wizard, as they are called, to have some help for his son, that he might be unwitched again, he answered, Oh, by no means, I had rather the witch should have my son than the devil. His son should suffer rather than he would sin him out of his sufferings. He who will not break the hedge of a fair command to avoid the foul way of some heavy affliction, may well conclude that his affliction is in love. Christians! what do you say, when you are in the mount; do you thus bespeak the Lord?—'Lord! take care of your glory, and let me rather sink in my affliction than sin under my affliction.' If this be the bent and frame of your heart, it is certain the affliction that is upon you is in love. The primitive times afforded many such brave spirits, though this age affords but few.

3. Thirdly, **If you enjoy the special presence of God with your spirits in your affliction, then your affliction is in love**, Psalm 23:4-6. Isaiah 43:2, 'When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you—when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burnt, neither shall the flames kindle upon you.' Have you a special presence of God with your spirit, strengthening of that, quieting of that, stilling of that, satisfying of that, cheering and comforting of that? Psalm 94:19, 'In the multitude of my thoughts,'—that is, of my troubled, intricate, ensnared, intertwined and perplexed thoughts—'your comforts delight my soul.' Here is a presence of God with his soul, here are comforts and delights that reach the soul, here is a cordial to strengthen the spirit.

When all things went cross with Andronicus, the old emperor of Constantinople, he took a Psalter into his hand, and opening the same, he lighted upon Psalm 68:14, 'When the Almighty scattered kings, they shall be white as snow in Salmon;' which scripture was a mighty comfort and refreshment to his spirit. Now you are to remember that Salmon signifies shady and dark; so was this mount, by the reason of many lofty fair-spread trees that were near it—but made lightsome by snow that covered it. So that to be white as snow in Salmon, is to have joy in affliction, light in darkness, mercy in misery, etc. And thus God was to the psalmist in the midst of his greatest afflictions—as snow in Salmon. When Paul would wish his dear son Timothy the best mercy in all the world, the greatest mercy in all the world, the most comprehensive mercy in all the world, a mercy that carries the virtue, value, and sweetness of all mercies in it, he wishes the presence of God with his spirit—2 Tim. 4:22, 'The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit', in point of honor, in point of profit and pleasure, in point of safety and security, and in point of comfort and joy. It is the greatest blessing and happiness in this world to have the presence of God with our spirits, especially in times of trials—2 Cor. 4:16, 'For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.' By the 'outward man,' you are to understand not merely our bodies—but our persons, estates, and outward conditions in this world; and by the 'inward man,' you are to understand our souls, our spiritual estate. Now, when the inward man gains new strength by every new trouble, when as troubles, pressures, afflictions, and tribulations are increased—a Christian's inward strength is increased also, when his afflictions are in love. When the presence of God is with our inward man, cheering, comforting, encouraging, strengthening, and renewing of that, we may safely conclude that all these trials, though they are ever so sharp and acute, yet they are in love.

I have read of a company of poor Christians that were banished into some remote parts, and one standing by, seeing them pass along, said that it was a very sad condition those poor people were in, to be thus exiled from the society of men, and to be made companions with the beasts of the field. True, said another, it were a sad condition indeed if they were carried to a place where they should not find their God; but let them be of good cheer, God goes along with them, and will exhibit the comforts of his presence wherever they go. **The presence of God with the spirits of his people—is a breast of comfort that can never be drawn dry**; it is an everlasting spring that will never fail, Heb. 13:5, 6. Well! Christian, you are under many great troubles, many sore trials—but tell me, does God give unto your soul such cordials, such supports, such comforts, and such refreshments, that the world knows not of? Oh! then, certainly your affliction is in love.

4. Fourthly, **If by your affliction you are made more conformable to Christ in his virtues, there certainly your afflictions are in love.** Many are conformable to Christ in their sufferings, who are not made conformable to Christ in his virtues by their sufferings; many are in poverty, neglect, shame, contempt, reproach, etc., like Christ was—who yet by these are not made more like Christ in his meekness, humbleness, heavenliness, holiness, righteousness, faithfulness, fruitfulness, goodness, contentedness, patience, submission, subjection. Oh! but if in these things you are made more like Christ, without question, your afflictions are in love. If by afflictions the soul be led to show forth the virtues of Christ, then certainly those afflictions are in love; for they never have such an operation but where they are set on by a hand of love.

When God strikes as an enemy, then all those strokes do but make a man more an enemy to God, as you see in Pharaoh and others; but when the strokes of God are the strokes of love, oh! then they do but bring the soul nearer Christ, and transform the soul more and more into the likeness of Christ, Isaiah 26:8-10. Jer. 6:3, Amos 6:1. If by your afflictions you are made more holy, humble, heavenly, etc., they are in love. Every afflicted Christian should strive to be honored with that eulogy of Salvian—an excellent disciple of a singular master. But,

5. Fifthly, **If by outward afflictions your soul is brought more under the inward teachings of God, doubtless your afflictions are love**, Job 34:31, 32. Psalm 94:12, 'Blessed is the man whom you chasten O Lord, and teach out of your law.' All the chastening in the world, without divine teaching, will never make a man blessed; that man who finds correction attended with instruction, and lashing with lessoning—is a happy man. If God, by the affliction that is upon you, shall teach you how to loathe sin more, how to trample upon the world more, and how to walk with God more—your afflictions are in love. If God shall teach you by afflictions how to die to sin more, and how to die to your relations more, and how to die to your self-interest more—your afflictions are in love. If God shall teach you by afflictions how to live to Christ more, how to lift up Christ more, and how to long for Christ more—your afflictions are in love. If God shall teach you by afflictions to get assurance of a better life, and to be still in a gracious readiness and preparedness for the day of your death—your afflictions are in love. If God shall teach you by afflictions how to mind heaven more, how to live in heaven more, and how to fit for heaven more—your afflictions are in love. If God by afflictions shall teach your proud heart how to lie more low, and your hard heart how to grow more tender, and your censorious heart how to grow more charitable, and your carnal heart how to grow more spiritual, and your froward heart how to grow more quiet—your afflictions are in love. When God teaches your thoughts as well as your brains, your heart as well as your head, these lessons, or any of these lessons—your afflictions are in love.

Pambo, an illiterate dunce, as the historian terms him, was a-learning that one lesson, 'I said I will take heed to my ways that I sin not with my tongue,' nineteen years, and yet had not learned it. Ah! it is to be feared that there are many who have been in the school of affliction above this nineteen years, and yet have not learned any beneficial lesson all this while. Surely their afflictions are not in love—but in wrath. Where God loves, he afflicts in love, and wherever God afflicts in love, there he will, sooner or later, teach such souls such lessons as shall do them good to all eternity. But,

(6.) Sixthly, **If God suits your burdens to your backs, your trials to your strength, according to that golden promise, 1 Cor. 10:13, your afflictions are in love.** 'There has no temptation taken you—but such as is common to man—but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it.' When God's strokes and a Christian's strength are suited one to another—all is in love, Isaiah 27:8, Jer. 30:11, 46:28. Let the load be ever so heavy that God lays on, if he puts under his everlasting arms—all is in love, Gen. 49:23, 24. As Egypt had many venomous creatures, so it had many antidotes against them. When God shall lay antidotes into the soul against all the afflictions which befall a Christian—then they are all in love. It is no matter how heavy the burden is, if God gives a shoulder to bear it—all is in love; it is no matter how bitter the cup is, if God gives courage to drink it off; it is no matter how hot the furnace is, if God gives power to walk in the midst of it—all is in love.

(7.) Seventhly, **If you are willing to lie in the furnace until your dross be consumed**; if you are willing that the plaster should lie on, though it smart, until the cure be wrought; if you are willing that the medicine should work, though it makes you sick, until the humors be expelled; all is in love, Job 23:10, Micah 7:9. Cain, and Saul, and Pharaoh, were all for the removing away of the stroke, the affliction; they cry not out, 'Our sins are greater than we are able to bear'—but they cry out, 'Our punishment is greater than we are able to bear;' they do not cry out, 'Lord, take away our sins,' but 'Lord, remove the stroke of your hand.' Oh! But when an affliction comes in love upon a soul, the language of that soul is this—Lord, remove the cause rather than the effect, the sin rather than the punishment, my corruption rather than my affliction! Lord! what will it avail me to have the sore skinned cover, if the corrupt matter still remains inside? there is no evil, Lord, to the evil of sin; and therefore deliver me rather from the evil of sin than the evil of suffering. I know, Lord, that affliction cannot be so displeasing to me as sin is dishonorable and displeasing to you; and therefore, Lord, let me see an end of my sin, though in this world I should never see an end of my sorrows; oh, let me see an end of my corruptions, though I should never see an end of my corrections; Lord, I had rather have a cure for my heart than a cure for my head; I had rather be made whole and sound within than without; I had rather have a healthy soul than a healthy body; a pure inside than a beautiful outside. If this be the settled frame and temper of your spirit, certainly your afflictions are in love.

There was one who, being under extremely great pains and torments in his body, occasioned by many sore diseases which were upon him, cried out, Had I all the world I would give it for ease, and yet for all the world I would not have ease until the cure be wrought. Sure his afflictions were in love. The first request, the great request, and the last request of a soul afflicted in love, is, "A cure, Lord! a cure, Lord! a cure, Lord! of this wretched heart, and this sinful life, and all will be well, all will be well."

(8.) Eighthly and lastly, **If you live a life of faith, while in your afflictions—then your afflictions are in love.** Now, what is it to live by faith in affliction—but to live in the exercising of faith upon those precious promises that are made over to an afflicted condition? God has promised to be with his people in their afflictions, Isaiah 43:2, 3; he has promised to support them under their affliction, Isaiah 41:10; he has promised to deliver his people out of their afflictions, Psalm 50:15; he has promised to purge away his people's sins by affliction, Isaiah 1:25; he has promised to make his people more partakers of his holiness by affliction, Heb. 12:10; he has promised to make affliction an inlet to a more full and sweet enjoyment of himself, Hos. 2:14; he has promised that he will never leave nor forsake his people in their afflictions, Heb. 13:5, 6; he has promised that all their afflictions shall work for their good, Zech. 13:9; Rom. 8:28. Now if your faith is drawn forth to feed upon these promises, if these be heavenly manna to your faith, and your soul lives upon them, and sucks strength and sweetness from them, under all the trials and troubles that are upon you—then your afflictions are in love.

A bee can suck honey out of a flower, which a fly cannot. If your faith can extract comfort and sweetness in your distresses, out of the breasts of precious promises, and gather one contrary out of another, honey out of the rock, Deut. 32:13, your afflictions are in love. The promises are full breasts, and God delights that faith should draw them; they are the food of faith, and the very soul of faith; they are an everlasting spring that can never be drawn dry; they are an inexhaustible treasure that can never be exhausted; they are the garden of paradise, and full of such choice flowers that will never fade—but be always fresh, sweet, green and flourishing. And if, in the day of affliction, they prove thus to your soul—your afflictions are in love.

Sertorius paid what he promised, with mere words—but God does not so. Men many times eat their words—but God will never eat his; all his promises in Christ are yes and in him amen, 1 Cor. 1:20. Has he spoken it, and shall it not come to pass? If in all your troubles your heart is drawn forth to act faith upon the promises—your troubles are from love. And thus much by way of answer to the first objection.

Objection 2. Oh—but, sir! **the Lord has smitten me in my nearest and dearest comforts and contentments—so how then can I hold my peace?** God has taken away a husband, a wife, a child, an only child, a bosom-friend, and how then can I be silent? To this I answer,

(1.) First, **If God did not strike you in that comfort which was near and dear unto you—it would not amount to an affliction.** That is not worthy the name of an affliction that does not strike at some bosom mercy; that trouble is no trouble that does not touch some choice contentment; that storm is no storm that only blows on the leaves—but never hurts the fruit; that thrust is no thrust that only touches the clothes—but never reaches the skin; that cut is no cut that only cuts the hat—but never touches the head; neither is that affliction any affliction that only reaches some remote enjoyment—but never reaches a Joseph, a Benjamin, etc.

(2.) Secondly, **The best mercy is not too good for the best God.** The best of the best is not good enough for him who is goodness itself; the best child, the best friend, the best jewel in all your crown must be readily resigned to your best God. There is no mercy, no enjoyment, no contentment worthy of God—but the best. The *milk* of mercy is for others—the *cream* of mercy is due to God. The choicest, the fairest, and the sweetest flowers are fittest for the bosom of God; if he will take the best flower in all the garden, and plant it in a better soil—have you any cause to murmur? Will you not remain silent before the Lord? Mal. 1:13, 14.

(3.) Thirdly, **Your near and dear mercies were first the Lord's before they were yours—and always the Lord's more than they were yours.** When God gives a mercy, he does not relinquish his own right in that mercy— 1 Chron. 29:14, 'Everything comes from You, and we have given You only what comes from Your own hand.' The sweet of mercy is yours—but the sovereign right to dispose of your mercies is the Lord's. Whatever you are, you owe to him who made you; and whatever you have, you owe to him who redeemed you. You say it is but just and reasonable that men should do with their own as they please; and is it not just and reasonable that God, who is Lord paramount, should do with his own as he pleases? Do you believe that the great God may do in heaven what he pleases? and on the seas what he pleases? and in the nations and kingdoms of the world what he pleases? and in your heart what he pleases? And do you not believe that God may do in your house what he pleases, and do with your mercies what he pleases?

Job 9:12, 'Behold, he takes away', or he snatches away, it may be a husband, a wife, a child, an estate, 'who can hinder him? Who will say unto him, what are you doing?' Who dares cavil against God? Who dares question that God who is unquestionable, that sovereign Lord who is uncontrollable, and who may do with his own whatever he pleases? Dan. 4:35, 'All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: What have you done?' Where is the prince, the peasant, the master, the servant, the husband, the wife, the father, the child, that dares say to God, 'What have you done?' Isaiah 14:9.

In matters of arithmetical accounts, set one against ten, ten against a hundred, a hundred against a thousand, a thousand against ten thousand, although there be great odds, yet there is some comparison; but if a man could set down an infinite number, then there could be no comparison at all, because the one is infinite, the other finite. So set all the princes and powers of the earth in opposition to God, they shall never be able to withstand him. It was once the saying of Pompey, that with one stamp of his foot he could raise all Italy in arms; but let the great God but stamp with his foot, and he can raise all the world in arms, to own him, to contend for him, or to revenge any affronts that are put upon him by any; and therefore who shall say unto him, 'What have you done?'

Water is stronger than earth, fire stronger than water, angels stronger than men, and God stronger than them all; and therefore who shall say unto God, 'What have you done?' when he takes their nearest and their dearest mercies from them? But,

(4.) Fourthly, **It may be, that you have not made any IMPROVEMENT on your near and dear mercies, while you had them.** You have been taken up with your mercies—but your heart has not been taken up in the improvement of them. There are many who are very much taken up with their mercies, who make no conscience of improving their mercies. Have your near and dear mercies been a star to lead you to Christ? Have they been a cloud by day, and a pillar of light by night, to lead you towards the heavenly Canaan? Have they been a Jacob's ladder to your soul? Have you by them been provoked to give up yourself to God as a living sacrifice? Rom. 12:1. Have you improved your near and dear mercies to the inflaming of your love to God, to the strengthening of your confidence in God, to the raising of your communion with God, and to the engaging of your heart to a more close and circumspect walking before God? etc. If you have not thus improved them—you have more cause to be mute than to murmur; to be silent than to be impatient; to be upset with yourself than to be upset with your God.

Children and fools use many things—but improve nothing. Such children and fools are most men; they are much taken up with their mercies—but they make no improvement of their mercies; and therefore no wonder if God strips them of their mercies. The *candle of mercy* is set up not to play by—but to work by.

Pliny speaks of one Cressinus, who improved a little piece of ground to a far greater advantage than his neighbors could a greater quantity of land. Thereupon he was accused of witchcraft; but he, to defend himself, brought into the court his working tools, and said, 'these are my witchcrafts, O you Romans! These working tools are all the witchcraft that I know of!' When the people heard this plea, with one consent they acquitted him, and declared him not guilty; and so his little piece of ground was secured to him.

There is no way to secure your mercies but by improving of them; there is nothing that provokes God to strip you of your mercies like the non-improvement of them—Mat. 25:28-31, 'Take therefore the one talent from him, and give it unto him who has ten talents.' By some stroke or other, God will take away the mercy that is not improved. If your slothfulness has put God upon passing a sentence of death upon the dearest mercy—thank **yourself**—and remain silent before the Lord!

(5.) Fifthly, **God has given you many examples of dear mercies being removed from those who are eminently pious.** How much more, then, should you be mute, where God has made many others examples to you! Did not God smite Aaron in his dear and near enjoyments, Lev. 10:1, 2 and does he not remain silent? Did not God smite David in his Absalom, and Abraham in his Sarah, and Job in his sons, daughters, estate, and body, and Jonah in his gourd? Are you more beloved than these godly ones? No! Have you more grace than these? No! Have you done more for divine glory than these? No! Are you richer in spiritual experiences than these? No! Have you attained to higher enjoyments than these? No! Have you been more serviceable in your generation than these? No! Have you been more exemplary in your life and conversation than these? etc. No! Then **why should you murmur and fret at that which has been the common lot of the dearest saints?**

Though God has smitten you in this or that near and dear enjoyment, it is your wisdom to remain silent before the Lord, for that God that has taken away **one**—might have taken away **all**. Justice writes a sentence of death upon all Job's mercies at once, and yet he holds his peace; and will not you hold yours, though God has cropped the fairest flower in all your garden?

So when our hearts begin to storm and complain when God smites us in this near mercy and in that dear enjoyment, oh let us lay the law of silence upon our hearts! let us charge our souls to be quiet! for that God that has taken away one child, might have taken away every child; and he who has taken away one friend, might have taken away every friend; and he who has taken away a part of your estate, might have taken away your whole estate—therefore remain silent before the Lord; let who will murmur—yet you be mute.

(6.) Sixthly, **It may be your sins have been much about your near and dear enjoyments.** It may be you have over-loved them, and over-prized them, and over-much delighted yourself in them. It may be they have often had your heart, when they should have had but your hand. It may be that care, that concern, that confidence, that joy which should have been expended upon more noble objects, has been expended upon them. Your heart, O Christian! is Christ's bed of spices, and it may be you have bedded your mercies with you, when Christ has been made to lie outside! Luke 2:7. You have had room for them—when you have had none for him! They have had the best—when the worst have been counted good enough for Christ!

It is said of Reuben, that he went up to his father's bed, Gen. 49:4. Ah! how often has one creature comfort and sometimes another, been put in between Christ and your souls! how often have your dear enjoyments gone up to Christ's bed!

It is said of the Babylonians, that they came in to Aholah and Aholibah's bed of love, Ezek. 23:17; may it not be said of your near and dear mercies, that they have come into Christ's bed of love, your hearts; they being that bed wherein Christ delights to rest and repose himself? Cant. 3:7. Now, if you take a husband, a child, a friend—into **that room in your soul** which only belongs to God—he will either embitter it, remove it, or be the death of it. If once the love of a wife runs out more to a servant than to her husband, the husband will remove that servant; though otherwise he was a servant worth gold.

The sweetest comforts of this life, they are but like treasures of snow; now do but take a handful of snow, and crush it in your hands, and it will melt away presently; but if you let it lie upon the ground, it will continue for some time. And so it is with the contentments of this world; if you grasp them in your hands and lay them too near your hearts, they will quickly melt and vanish away; but if you will not hold them too fast in your hands, nor lay them too close to your hearts, they will abide the longer with you.

There are those who love their mercies into their graves—who hug their mercies to death—who kiss them until they kill them! Many a man has slain his mercies, by setting too great a value upon them! Many a man has sunk his *ship of mercy*, by overloading it. Over-loved mercies are seldom long lived— Ezek. 24:21, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am about to desecrate my sanctuary—the stronghold in which you take pride, the delight of your eyes, the object of your affection. The sons and daughters you left behind will fall by the sword.' The way to lose your mercies is to indulge them; the way to destroy them is to fix your minds and hearts upon them. You may write bitterness and death upon that mercy first—which has first taken away your heart from God. Now, if God has stripped you of that very mercy with which you have often committed spiritual adultery and idolatry—have you any cause to murmur? Have you not rather cause to remain silent before the Lord, and to be mute before the Lord? **Christians! Your hearts are Christ's royal throne, and in this throne Christ will be chief**, as Pharaoh said to Joseph, Gen. 12:40; he will endure no competitor. If you attempt to **enthrone the creature**, be it ever so near and dear unto you—Christ will dethrone it! He will destroy it! He will quickly lay them in a bed of dust—who shall aspire to his royal throne! But,

(7.) Seventhly, **You have no cause to murmur because of the loss of such near and dear enjoyments, considering those more noble and spiritual mercies and favors that you still enjoy.** Grant that Joseph is not, and Benjamin is not, Gen. 42:36. Yet Jesus is! He is yesterday, and today, and the same forever, Heb. 13:8; your union and communion with Christ remains still; the immortal seed abides in you still, 1 John 3:9; the Sun of righteousness shines upon you still; you are in favor with God still, and you are under the anointings of the Spirit still, and under the influences of heaven still, etc. So why then should you mutter—and not rather remain silent before the Lord?

I have read of one Didymus, a godly preacher, who was blind; Alexander, a godly man, once asked him, whether he was not sorely troubled and afflicted for lack of his sight? Oh yes! said Didymus, it is a great affliction and grief unto me! Then Alexander chid him, saying, Has God given you an excellency above an angel—and are you troubled for that which rats and mice and brute beasts have? Ah, Christians! has God blessed you with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places? Eph. 1:3, 4. Has the Lord given you himself for a portion? Has he given you his Son for your redemption, and his Spirit for your instruction—and will you murmur? Has he given his grace to adorn you, his promises to comfort you, his ordinances to better you, and the hopes of heaven to encourage you; and will you mutter?

Paulinus Nolanus, when his city was taken from him, prayed thus—'Lord! said he, let me not be troubled at the loss of my gold, silver, honor, etc., for you are all, and much more than all these unto me!' **In the absence of all your sweetest enjoyments, Christ will be all in all unto you**, Col. 3:11. My jewels are my husband, said Phocion's wife. My ornaments are my two sons, said the mother of the Gracchi. My treasures are my friends, said Constantius. And so may a Christian under his greatest losses say—Christ is my richest jewels, my chief treasures, my best ornaments, my sweetest delights. What all these things are to a carnal heart, a worldly heart—that and more—is Christ to me!

(8.) Eighthly, **If God, by smiting you in your nearest and dearest enjoyments, shall put you upon a more thorough smiting and mortifying of your dearest sins—you have no cause to murmur.** God cures David of adultery by killing his endeared child. There is some Delilah, some darling, some beloved sin or other—that a Christian's calling, condition, constitution, or temptations—leads him to play with, and to hug in his own bosom, Psalm 18:23, Heb. 12:1. As in a plot of ground that lies untilled, among the great variety of weeds there is usually some master-weed, which is more plenteous and more repulsive than all the rest. And as it is in the body of man, that although in some degree or other, more or less, there is a mixture of all the four elements, not any of them wholly lacking, yet there is some one of them predominant that gives the denomination, in which regard some are said to be of a sanguine, some of a phlegmatic, some of a choleric, and some of a melancholic constitution.

So it is also in the souls of men—though there be a general mixture and medley of all evil and corrupt qualities, yet there is some one sin which is usually paramount, which, like the prince of devils, is most powerful and prevalent, which sways and manifests itself more eminently and evidently than any other of them do. And as in every man's body there is a seed and principle of death, yet in some there is a proneness to one kind of disease more than another that may hasten death. So, though the root of sin and bitterness has spread itself over all, yet every man has his inclination to one kind of sin rather than another, and this may be called a man's besetting sin, his bosom sin, his darling sin. Now, it is one of the hardest works in this world to subdue and bring under control, this bosom sin! Oh! the prayers, the tears, the sighs, the sobs, the groans, the gripes that it will cost a Christian before he subdues this darling sin!

Look upon a rabbit's skin, how well it comes off until it comes to the head—but then what hauling and pulling is there before you can remove it! So it is in the mortifying, in the crucifying of sin; a man may easily subdue and mortify such and such sins—but when it comes to the head-sin, to the master-sin, to the bosom-sin, oh! what tugging and pulling is there! what striving and struggling is there to get off that sin, to get down that sin! Now, if the Lord, by smiting you in some near and dear enjoyment, shall draw out your heart to fall upon smiting of your master-sin, and shall so sanctify the affliction, as to make it issue in the mortification of your bosom corruption, what eminent cause will you have rather to bless him, than to sit down and murmur against him! And doubtless if you are dear to God, God will, by striking your dearest mercy, put you upon striking at your darling sin; and therefore do not murmur, even when God touches the apple of your eye!

(9.) Ninthly, consider **That the Lord has many ways to make up the loss of a near and dear mercy to you. He can make up your loss in something else that may be better for you, and he will certainly make up your loss, either in kind or in worth**, Matt. 19:27-30. He took from **David** an Absalom, and he gave him a Solomon; he took from him a Michal, and gave him a wise Abigail. He took from **Job** seven sons and three daughters, and afterwards he gives him seven more sons and three more daughters. He took from Job a fair estate, and at last doubled it to him. He removed the *bodily* presence of Christ from his **disciples**—but gave them more abundantly of his *spiritual* presence, which was far the greater and the sweeter mercy. If **Moses** is taken away—a Joshua shall be raised in his place. If **David** is gathered to his fathers—a Solomon shall succeed him in his throne. If John the Baptist is cast into prison, rather than the pulpit shall stand empty, a greater than John, even Christ himself will begin to preach!

He who lives upon God in the loss of creature comforts, shall find all made up in the *God of comforts*; he shall be able to say, Though my child is not, my friend is not, my spouse is not—yet my God lives, and 'blessed be my rock,' Psalm 89:26. Though this mercy is not, and that mercy is not, yet covenant-mercies, yet 'the sure mercies of David' continue, 2 Sam. 23:5; these bed and board with me, these will go to the grave and to glory with me.

I have read of a godly man, who, living near a philosopher, did often persuade him to become a Christian. Oh! but, said the philosopher, I must, or may lose all for Christ. To which the godly man replied, if you lose anything for Christ, he will be sure to repay it a hundred-fold. Yes—but, said the philosopher, will you be bound for Christ, that if he does not pay me, you will? Yes, that I will, said the godly man. So the philosopher became a Christian, and the godly man entered into a written bond for performance of covenants. Some time after it happened that the philosopher fell sick on his deathbed, and, holding the bond in his hand, sent for the party engaged, to whom he gave up the bond, and said, Christ has paid all, there is nothing for you to pay, take your bond, and cancel it.

Christ will allow none of his children to suffer a loss; he has all, and he will make up all to them. In the close, Christ will pay the reckoning. No man shall ever have cause to say that he has been a loser by Christ. And, therefore, you have much cause to be mute, you have no cause to murmur, though God has snatched the fairest and the sweetest flower out of your bosom.

(10.) Tenthly, **How can you tell but that which you call a near and dear mercy, if it had been continued longer to you, might have proved the greatest cross, the greatest calamity and misery, which you ever had?** Our mercies, like choice wines, many times turn into vinegar. Our fairest hopes are often blasted. That very mercy which we once have said should be a staff to support us—has proved a sword to pierce us. How often have our most flourishing mercies withered in our hands, and our bosom contentments been turned into gall and wormwood! If God had continued the life of David's child to him, it would have been but a living monument of his sin and shame; and all that knew the child would have pointed at him, 'Yonder goes David's bastard child!'—and so would have kept David's wound still a-bleeding, 2 Sam. 12:16.

Many parents have sought the lives of their children with tears—who have lived afterwards to see them take such wicked courses and come to such dismal ends—as have brought their grey head with sorrow to their graves! It had been ten thousand times a greater mercy to many parents to have buried their children as soon as they were born, than to see them come to such unhappy ends as they often do.

Well! Christian, it may be the Lord has taken from you such a hopeful son, or such a dear daughter, and you say—How can I hold my peace? But hark, Christian, hark! Would not every sin which they had committed against your gracious God caused a new throe in your soul? Would not every temptation which they had fallen before been as a dagger at your heart? Would not every affliction that should have befallen them been as a knife at your throat? What are those pains, and pangs, and throes of child-birth, compared to those after pains, pangs, and throes that might have been brought upon you by the sins and sufferings of your children? Well! Christians, remain silent before the Lord, for you do not know what thorns in your eyes, what goads in your sides, nor what spears in your hearts—such near and dear mercies might have proved had they been longer continued.

(11.) Eleventhly, **You can not tell how bad your heart might have proved under the enjoyment of those near and dear mercies, which now you have lost.** Israel was very bad while they were in the wilderness—but they were much worse when they came to possess Canaan, that *land of desires*. Man's sin is apt to rise with outward prosperity. In the winter, men gird their clothes close about them—but in the summer they let them hang loose. In the *winter of adversity*, many a Christian girds his heart close to God, to Christ, to gospel, to godliness, to ordinances, to duties, etc., who in the *summer of mercy* hangs loose from all.

I have read of a pine tree, that, if the bark be pulled off, it will last a long time; but if the bark remains long on the tree—it rots the tree. Ah! how bad, how rotten, how base, would many have proved, had God not pulled off their bark of health, wealth, friendship! etc. Near and dear relations, they stick as close to us as the bark of a tree sticks to the tree, and if God should not pull off this bark, how apt should we be to rot and corrupt ourselves; therefore God is glad to bark us, and peel us, and strip us naked and bare of our dearest enjoyments and sweetest contentments, that so our souls, like the pine tree, may prosper and thrive the better.

Who can seriously consider of this, and not be silent, even then when God takes a jewel out of his bosom? Heap all the sweetest contentments and most desirable enjoyments of this world upon a man, they will not make him a Christian; heap them upon a Christian, they will not make him a better Christian. Many a Christian has been made worse by the good things of this world; but where is the Christian that has been bettered by them? Therefore be quiet when God strips you of them!

(12.) Twelfthly, and lastly, **Get your heart more affected with spiritual losses—and then your soul will be less afflicted with those temporal losses that you mourn under.** Have you lost nothing of that presence of God—that once you had in your heart? Have you lost none of those warnings, meltings, quickenings, and cheerings—which once you had? Have you lost nothing of your communion with God, nor of the joys of the Spirit, nor of that peace of conscience—which once you enjoyed? Have you lost none of that ground which once you had gained upon sin, Satan, and the world? Have you lost nothing of that holy vigor and heavenly heat—which once you had in your heart? If you have not, which would be a miracle, a wonder; why do you complain of this or that temporal loss? For what is this, but to complain of the loss of your purse, when your God is safe? If you are a loser in spirituals, why do you not rather complain that you have lost your God—than that you have lost your gold; and that you have lost your Christ—than that you have lost your husband; and that you have lost your child, and that you are damnified in spirituals—than that you are damnified in temporals? Do you mourn over the body, which the soul has left? mourn rather over the soul that God has forsaken, as Samuel did for Saul, says one. 1 Sam. 15:14, seq.

I have read of Honorius, a Roman emperor, who was simple and childish enough; when one told him *Rome* was lost, he was exceedingly grieved, and cried out, 'Alas! alas!' for he supposed that it was his *hen* which he had nicknamed *Rome*—which hen he exceedingly loved. But when it was told him, that it was his imperial city of Rome, which was besieged, and taken, and all the citizens plundered, and made a prey to the crude enraged soldiers—then his spirits were revived that his loss was not so great as he imagined.

Now, what is the loss of a husband, a wife, a child, a friend—to the loss of God, Christ, the Spirit—or the least measure of grace or communion with God? etc. I say, What are all such losses—but the loss of a hen—compared to the loss of Rome? And yet so simple and childish are many Christians, that they are more affected and afflicted with the loss of this and that poor temporal enjoyment—than they are with the loss of their most spiritual attainments! Ah, Christians! be but more affected with spiritual losses, and you will be more quiet and silent under temporal losses! Let the loss of Rome trouble you more—and then the loss of your hen will not trouble you at all. Let these things suffice for an answer to the second objection!

Objection 3. **Oh—but my afflictions, my troubles have been LONG upon me! and how then can I hold my peace?** Were they but of yesterday, I would be quiet; but they are of a long continuance; and therefore how can I be silent? To this I answer,

(1.) First, You cannot date your afflictions from the first day of your pollution. You have been polluted from the womb—but you have not been afflicted from the womb, Psalm 51:5. Many have been the days, the years, since you was born in sin—but few have been the days, the years, that you have experienced sorrow. You cannot easily number the days of your sinning—but you can easily number the days of your sufferings. You cannot number your days of mercy—but you can easily number your days of calamity. You cannot number your days of health—but you can easily count your days of sickness.

(2.) Secondly, **Your afflictions are not so long as the afflictions of other saints.** COMPARE your *winter nights* and other saints' winter nights together; your *storms* and troubles and other saints' storms and troubles together; your *losses* and other saints' losses together; your *miseries* and other saints' miseries together. Your afflictions are but as a moment—they are but as yesterday compared with the afflictions of other saints, whose whole lives have been made up of sorrows and sufferings—as the life of Christ was. Many a man's life has been nothing but a lingering death—Job 21:25, 'And another dies in the bitterness of his soul, and never eats with pleasure.' There are those that have never a good day all their days—who have not a day of rest among all their days of trouble; nor a day of health among all their days of sickness; nor a day of gladness among all their days of sadness; nor a day of strength among all their days of weakness; nor a day of honor among all their days of reproach; whose whole life is one continued winter's night, who every day drink gall and wormwood, who lie down sighing, who rise groaning, and who spend their days in complaining, 'No sorrow like our sorrow, no sufferings like our sufferings!' Some there be who have always tears in their eyes, sorrows in their hearts, rods on their backs, and crosses in their hands—but it is not so with you! Therefore be silent.

(3.) Thirdly, **The longer your affliction has been, the sweeter will heaven be to you at last.** The longer the Israelites had been in the wilderness, the sweeter was Canaan to them at last; the longer the storm, the sweeter the calm; the longer the winter nights, the sweeter the summer days. Long afflictions will much set off the glory of heaven. The harbor is most sweet and desirable to those who have been long tossed upon the seas; so will heaven be to those who have been long in a sea of trouble. The new wine of Christ's kingdom is most sweet to those that have been long a-drinking of gall and vinegar, Luke 22:18. The crown of glory will be most delightful to those who have been long in combating with the world, the flesh, and the devil. The longer our journey is—the sweeter will be our end; and the longer our passage is—the sweeter will our haven be. The higher the mountain—the gladder we shall be when we are got to the top of it. The longer the heir is kept from his inheritance—the more delight he will have when he comes to possess it.

(4.) Fourthly, **They are not long—but short—if compared to that eternity of glory that is reserved for the saints**, 2 Cor. 4:16-18. If you turn to the words, you shall find for affliction, glory; for light afflictions, a weight of glory; and for short momentary afflictions, eternal glory. There will quickly be an end of your sadness—but there will never be an end of your happiness. There will soon be an end of your calamity and misery—but there will never be an end of your felicity and glory. The kingdoms of this world are not lasting, much less are they everlasting; they have all their final years—but the kingdom of heaven is an everlasting kingdom; of that there is no end. There are seven sorts of crowns that were in use among the Roman victors—but they were all fading and perishing; but the crown of glory that at last God will set upon the heads of his saints, shall continue as long as God himself continues. Who can look upon those eternal mansions that are above, and those everlasting pleasures that be at God's right hand, and say that his affliction is long? **Well, Christian, let your affliction be ever so long, yet one hour's being in the bosom of Christ will make you forget both the length and strength of all your afflictions!**

(5.) Fifthly, **The longer you have been afflicted—the more in spiritual experiences you have been enriched.** 2 Cor. 1:5, 'For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us—so our consolation also abounds by Christ.' The lower the ebb—the higher the tide; the more pain—the more gain; the more afflicted—the more comforted; the lower we are cast down—the higher we shall be raised. Of all Christians, none so rich in spiritual experiences—as those that have been long in the school of affliction. Oh! the blessed stories that such call tell of the power of God supporting them, of the wisdom of God directing them, of the favor of God comforting them, of the presence of God assisting them. Oh! the love-tokens, the love-letters, the bracelets, the jewels which they are able to produce, since they have been in the furnace of affliction.

Oh! the **sin** that long afflictions have discovered and mortified. Oh! the **temptations** that long afflictions have prevented and vanquished. You shall as soon number the stars of heaven and the sands of the sea, as you shall number up the heavenly experiences of such Christians that have been long under afflictions. The afflicted Christian's heart is fullest of spiritual treasure. Though he may be poor in the world, yet he is rich in faith and holy experiences, James 2:5; and what are all the riches of this world to spiritual experiences? One spiritual experience is more worth than a world, and upon a dying bed and before a judgment-seat, every man will be of this opinion.

The men of this world will with much quietness and calmness of spirit bear much, and suffer much, and suffer long, when they find their sufferings to add to their revenues; and shall nature do more than grace? It is the common voice of nature, 'Who will show us any good' Psalm 4:6; how shall we come to be great, and high, and rich in the world? We care not what we suffer, nor how long we suffer—so we may but add house to house, heap to heap, bag to bag, and land to land, Isa 5:8. Oh how much more then should Christians be quiet and calm under all their afflictions, though they are never so long, considering that they do but add jewels to a Christian's crown; they do but add to his spiritual experiences. The long afflicted Christian has the fullest and the greatest trade; and in the day of account, will be found the richest man.

(6.) Sixthly, **Long afflictions sometimes are but preparations to long-lived mercies.** Joseph's thirteen years' imprisonment was but a preparative to eighty years, reigning like a king; David's seven years' banishment was but a preparative to forty years' reigning in much honor and glory; Job's long afflictions were but preparatives to more long-lived mercies, as you may see in that last of Job; and those sad and sore trials that the Jews have been under, for above these sixteen hundred years, are to prepare them for those matchless mercies, and those endless glories, in some sense, that God in the latter days will crown them with "O afflicted city, lashed by storms and not comforted, I will build you with stones of turquoise, your foundations with sapphires. I will make your battlements of rubies, your gates of sparkling jewels, and all your walls of precious stones. All your sons will be taught by the Lord, and great will be your children's peace. In righteousness you will be established: Tyranny will be far from you; you will have nothing to fear. Terror will be far removed; it will not come near you. Isaiah 54:11-14.

Though they have been long afflicted and tossed, yet they shall at last upon glorious foundations be established; God will not only raise them out of their distressed estate wherein now they are—but he will advance them to a most eminent and glorious condition in this world; they shall he very glorious, and outshine all the world in spiritual excellencies and outward dignities—Isaiah 60:14, 16, 'The sons also of those who afflicted you shall come bending unto you, and all those who despised you shall bow themselves down at the soles of your feet—and they shall call you, the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through you, I will make you an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations.'

Ah, Christians! do not mutter nor murmur under your long afflictions, for you do not know but that by these long afflictions God may prepare and fit you for such favors and blessings that may never have end. By long afflictions God many times prepares his people for temporal, spiritual, and eternal mercies. If God by long afflictions makes more room in your soul for himself, his Son, his Spirit, his word; if by long afflictions he shall crucify your heart more to the world and to your relations, and frame and fashion your soul more for celestial enjoyments; have you any cause to murmur? Surely not! But,

(7) Seventhly, **The longer a saint is afflicted on earth—the more glorious he shall shine in heaven**. The more affliction here—the more glory hereafter. This truth may be thus made out:

[1.] First, **The more gracious souls are afflicted, the more their graces are exercised and increased**, Heb. 12:10, Rom. 5:3-5. Now, the more grace here, the more glory hereafter; the higher in grace, the higher in glory. Grace differs nothing from glory but in name—grace is glory in the bud, and glory is grace at the full. Glory is nothing but the perfection of grace. Heavenly happiness is nothing but the perfection of holiness. Grace is glory in the seed—and glory is grace in the flower. Grace is glory militant—and glory is grace triumphant. Grace and glory differ in degree—not kind. Now, it is most certain that the more gracious souls are afflicted—the more their graces are exercised; and the more grace is exercised—the more it is increased, as I have sufficiently demonstrated in this treatise already. But,

[2.] Secondly, **The longer a gracious soul is afflicted, the more his pious duties will be multiplied.** Psalm 109:4, 'In return for my friendship they accuse me; but I give myself unto prayer;' or as the Hebrew reads it, 'But I am prayer,' or 'a man of prayer.' In times of afflictions a Christian is all prayer; he is never so much a man of prayer, a man given up to prayer—as in times of affliction. A Christian is never so frequent, so fervent, so abundant in the work of the Lord, as when he is afflicted. 'Lord! in trouble have they visited you, they poured out prayer when your chastening was upon them.' Now, they do not only pray—but they pour out prayer; they were freely, largely, and abundantly in prayer when the rod was upon them. Look! as men plentifully pour out water for the quenching of a fire, so did they plentifully pour out their prayers before the Lord. And as affliction puts a man upon being much in prayer, so it puts him upon other duties of religion answerably. Now, this is most certain, that **though God will reward no man for his works, yet he will reward every man according to his works**—1 Cor. 15:58, 'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord!' 2 Cor. 9:6, 'But this I say, he who sows sparingly shall reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall reap bountifully;' or he who sows in benedictions or blessings shall reap in benedictions, as it runs in the original.

It is an excellent observation of Calvin upon God's rewarding the Rechabites' obedience, Jer. 35:19; God, says he, often recompenses the shadows and seeming-appearance of virtue, to show what delight he takes in the ample rewards he has reserved for true and sincere piety. Now, if the longer a Christian is afflicted, the more his pious services will be multiplied, and the more they are multiplied, the more his glory at last will be increased—then the longer a saint is afflicted on earth, the more glory he shall have when he comes to heaven. But,

[3.] Thirdly, **The longer any saint is afflicted, the more into the image and likeness of Christ he will be transformed.** It is one of God's great designs and ends in afflicting of his people, to make them more conformable to his Son; and God will not lose his end. Men often lose theirs—but God never has nor will lose his; and experience tells us that God does every day, by afflictions, accomplish his end upon his people. The longer they are afflicted, the more they are made conformable to Christ in meekness, lowliness, spiritualness, heavenliness, in faith, love, self-denial, pity, compassion, etc. Now certainly, the more like to Christ, the more beloved of Christ. The more a Christian is like to Christ, the more he is the delight of Christ; and the more like to Christ on earth, the nearer the soul shall sit to Christ in heaven. Nothing makes a man more conformable to Christ than afflictions.

Many would wear the crown with Christ, that do not care for bearing the cross with Christ. But,

(8.) Eighthly, **Impatience will but lengthen out the day of the sorrows.** Every impatient act adds one link more to the chain; every act of frowardness adds one lash more to those that have already been laid out; every act of muttering will but add stroke to stroke, and sting to sting; every act of murmuring will but add burden to burden, and storm to storm. The most compendious way to lengthen out your long afflictions is to fret, and vex, and murmur under them. As you would see a speedy end of your long afflictions, sit mute and silent under them.

(9.) Ninthly, **God's time is the best time; mercy is never nearer.** Salvation is at hand, deliverance is at the door, when a man's heart is brought into such a frame as to be freely willing that God should time his mercy and time his deliverance for him, Acts 27:13-44. The physician's time is the best time for the patient to have ease. The impatient patient cries out to his physician, Oh! sir, a little ease, a little refreshment! Oh the pains, the tortures, that I am under! Oh, sir, I think every hour two, and every two ten, until comfort comes, until refreshment comes! But the prudent physician has turned the hour-glass, and is resolved that this medicine shall work so long, though his patient frets, flings, roars, tears. So, when we are under afflictions, we are apt to cry out, How long, Lord, shall it be before ease comes, before deliverance comes? Oh the tortures, oh the torments, that we are under! Lord, a little refreshment! Oh how long are these nights! oh how tedious are these days! But God has turned our glass, and he will not hearken to our cry until our glass be out. After all our fretting and flinging, we must wait his time, who knows best when to deliver us, and how to deliver us, out of all our troubles, and who will not stay a moment when the glass is out that he has turned. But,

(10.) Tenthly, and lastly, **They shall last no longer than there is need, and then they shall work for your good.** It is with souls as it is with bodies; some bodies are more easily and more suddenly cured than others are, and so are some souls. God will not allow the plaster to lie one day, no—not one hour, no—not a moment, longer than there is need. Some flesh heals quickly; proud flesh is long a-healing. By affliction God quickly heals some—but others are long a-healing—1 Pet. 1:6, 'If need be, you are in heaviness, through manifold trials,' or through various afflictions. The burden shall lie no longer upon you than needs must; your pain shall endure no longer than needs must; your illness shall make you no longer sick than needs must, etc. Your heavenly Father is a physician, as wise as he is loving. When your heart begins to grow high—he sees there is need of some heavy affliction to bring it low; when your heart grows cold—he sees there is need of some fiery affliction to heat it and warm it; when your heart grows dull and dead—he sees there is need of some sharp affliction to enliven and quicken it. And as your afflictions shall continue no longer than there is need, so they shall last no longer than they shall work for your good. If all along they shall work for your good, you have no cause to complain that your afflictions are long. That they shall thus work, I have fully proved in the former part of this book. And thus much for answer to the third objection.

Objection 4. **I would be mute and silent under my afflictions—but my afflictions daily MULTIPLY and increase upon me**; like the waves of the sea, they come rolling over the neck of one another, etc.; and how then can I hold my peace? How can I lay my hand upon my mouth, when the sorrows of my heart are daily increased? To this I answer thus:

(1.) First, **Your afflictions are not so many as your sins**, Psalm 51:12. Your sins are as the stars of heaven, and as the sand upon the sea, that cannot be numbered. There are three things that no Christian can number—

1. his sins;
2. divine favors;
3. the joys and pleasures which are at Christ's right hand.

But there is no Christian so poor an accountant—but that he may quickly sum up the number of his troubles and afflictions in this world. Your sins, O Christian, are like the Syrians that filled the country—but your afflictions are like the two little flocks of goats which grazed before them, 1 Kings 20:27; therefore remain silent before the Lord.

(2) Secondly, **If such should not be mute and silent under their afflictions, whose afflictions are increased and multiplied upon them, there are none in the world who will be found mute and silent under their afflictions**—for certainly there are none who do not find the waters of affliction to grow daily upon them. If this be not so, what means the bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen? 1 Sam. 15:14. What means the daily sighs, groans, and complaints of Christians, if their troubles, like the waters in Ezekiel's sanctuary, be not still increasing upon them? Ezek. 47:1, 20. Every day brings us tidings of new straits, new troubles, new crosses, new losses, new trials, etc.

(3.) Thirdly, **Your afflictions are not so many as God MIGHT have exercised you with**. God could as easily exercise you with ten as with two, and with a hundred as with ten, and with a thousand as with a hundred. Let your afflictions be ever so many—yet they are not so many as they might have been, had God either consulted with your sins, with your deserts, or with his own justice. There is no comparison between those afflictions which God has inflicted upon you, and those that he might have inflicted. You have not one burden of a thousand that God could have laid on—but he would not; therefore remain silent before the Lord.

(4.) Fourthly, **Your afflictions are not so many as your mercies**, no, they are not to be named in the day wherein your mercies are spoken of. What are your crosses to your comforts, your miseries to your mercies, your days of sickness to your days of health, your days of weakness to the days of strength, your days of scarcity to your days of plenty? And this is that the wise man would have us seriously to consider—Eccles. 7:14, 'In the day of adversity consider,'—but what must we consider? —'that God has set the one over against the other.' As God has set winter and summer, night and day, fair weather and foul, one over against another; so let us set our present mercies over against our present troubles, and we shall presently find that our mercies exceed our troubles, that they mightily over-balance our present afflictions; therefore let us be silent, let us lay our hands upon our mouths.

(5.) Fifthly, **If you cast up a just and righteous account, you will find that they are not so many as the afflictions which have befallen other saints.** Have you reckoned up the afflictions which befell Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Asaph, Haman, the prophets and apostles? If you have, you will say that your afflictions are no afflictions, compared to those which have befallen them. Their lives were filled up with sorrows and sufferings—but so are not yours; therefore kiss the rod and be silent. It may be, If you look upon your relations, your friends, your neighbors, you may find many whose afflictions for number and weight do much outweigh yours; therefore be silent, murmur not, hold your peace.

(6.) Sixthly, **You have not so many afflictions as attended our Lord Jesus; whose whole life, from the cradle to the cross, was nothing but a life of sufferings.** Osorius, writing of the sufferings of Christ, says, That the crown of thorns bored his head with seventy-two wounds. Many seventy-two afflictions did Christ meet with while he was in this world. None can be ignorant of this who have but read the New Testament. He is called 'a man of sorrows;' his whole life was filled up with sorrows. When he was but a little past thirty years of age, sorrows, pains, troubles, oppositions, persecutions, had so worn him, that the Jews judged him to be towards fifty years old, John 8:57. A man were as good compare the number of his bosom friends with the stars of heaven, as compare his afflictions and the afflictions of Christ together.

(7.) Seventhly, **Muttering and murmuring will but add to the number.** When the child is under the rod, his crying and fretting does but add lash to lash, blow to blow; but of this, enough before.

(8.) Eighthly, and lastly, **Though afflictions are many, yet they are not so many as the joys, the pleasures, the delights that are at Christ's right hand.** As the pleasures of heaven are matchless and endless, so they, are numberless. Augustine, speaking concerning what we can say of heaven, says that it is but a little drop of the sea, and a little spark of the great furnace. Those good things of eternal life are so many, that they exceed number; so great, that they exceed measure; so precious, that they are above all estimation. Neither Christ nor heaven can be hyperbolised. For every affliction, many thousand joys and delights will attend the saints in a glorified estate. What will that life be, or rather what will not that life be, says one, speaking of heaven, since all good is in such a life; voices and music which time cannot ravish away; fragrances which are never dissipated; a feast which is never consumed; a blessing which eternity bestows—but eternity shall never see at an end. And let this suffice for answer to this fourth objection.

Objection 5. **My afflictions are very GREAT, how then can I hold my peace?** Though they were many, yet if they were not great, I would be mute—but alas! they are very great. Oh! how can I be silent under them? How can I now lay my hand upon my mouth?

Answer (1.) To this I answer, **Though your afflictions are great, yet they are not so great as your sins**, yourself being judge; therefore remain silent before the Lord—Ezra 9:13, 'And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespasses, seeing that you our God have punished us less than our iniquities deserve.' Those who were under the sense and guilt of great sins—have cause to be silent under their greatest sufferings. Nearer complain that your afflictions are great—until you can say that your sins are not great. It is but justice that great afflictions should attend great sins; therefore be quiet. Your sins are like great rocks and mighty mountains—but your afflictions are not so great; therefore lay your hand upon your mouth. The remembrance of great sins should cool and calm a man's spirit under his greatest troubles; and if the sense of your great sins will not stop your mouth and silence your heart, I know not what will.

(2.) Secondly, **It may be your afflictions are not great, if you look upon them with Scripture spectacles**, 1 Peter 5:10. Carnal reason many times looks upon molehills as mountains, and scratches upon the hand as stabs at the heart; we make elephants of flies, and of little pigmies we frame giants. Carnal reason often looks upon troubles through *false glasses*. As there are some glasses that will make great things seem little, so there are others that will make little things seem great, and it may be that you look upon your afflictions through one of them, Isa 54:7, 8. Look upon your afflictions in the glass of the word; look upon them in a Scripture dress, and then they will be found to be but little. He who shall look into a gospel glass, shall be able to say, "Heavy afflictions are light, long afflictions are short, bitter afflictions are sweet, and great afflictions are little." It is good to make a judgment of your afflictions by a gospel light and by a gospel rule. "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our **light** and **momentary** troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is **temporary**, but what is unseen is eternal." 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Artemon, an engineer, was afraid of his own shadow. Men that look not upon their afflictions in a Scripture dress, will be afraid even of the shadow of trouble, they will cry out, 'No affliction to our affliction, no burden to our burden, no cross to our cross, no loss to our loss!' But one look into a gospel glass would make them change their tune. The lion is not always so great nor so terrible as he is painted; neither are our troubles always so great as we imagine them to be. When Hagar's bottle of water was spent, she sat down and fell a-weeping, as if she had been utterly undone, Gen. 21:17-19; her provision and her patience, her bottle and her hope were both out together. But her affliction was not so great as she imagined, for there was a well of water near, though for a time she saw it not. So many Christians, they eye the empty bottle, the affliction, the burden that is at present upon them, and then they fall a-weeping, a-whining, a-complaining, a-repining, a-murmuring, as if they were utterly undone! And yet a well of water, a well of comfort, a well of refreshment, a well of deliverance is near—and their case is no way so sad, nor so bad as they imagine it to be.

(3.) Thirdly, **The greater your afflictions are, the nearer is deliverance to you.** When these waters rise high then salvation comes upon the wings; when your troubles are very great, then mercy will ride post to deliver you. Deut. 32:36, 'For the Lord will judge his people and have compassion on his servants when he sees their strength is gone.' Israel of old, and England of late years, has often experienced this truth. Wine was nearest, when the water-pots were filled with water up to the brim, John 2:1-11; so oftentimes mercy is nearest, deliverance is nearest, when our afflictions are at the highest. When a Christian is brim-full of troubles, then the wine of consolation is at hand; therefore hold your peace, murmur not—but sit silent before the Lord.

(4.) Fourthly, **Your afflictions are not great, if compared to the glory that shall be revealed**, 2 Cor. 4:16-18—Rom. 8:18, 'For I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us—or upon us.' The apostle, upon casting up of his accounts, concludes that all the pains, chains, troubles, trials, and torments which they meet with in this world, was not to be put in the balance with the glory of heaven. As the globe of the earth, which the mathematicians account is many thousands of miles in compass, yet being compared unto the greatness of the starry sky's circumference, is but a small point; so **the troubles, afflictions, and sorrows of this life, in comparison with eternal happiness and blessedness, are to be reputed as nothing; they are but as the point of a pin—compared to the starry heavens.**

Those who have heard most of the glory of heaven, have not heard one quarter of that which the saints shall find there; that glory is **inconceivable** and **inexpressible**! Augustine relates, that the very same day wherein Jerome died, he was in his study, and had got pen, ink, and paper, to write something, of the glory of heaven to Jerome; and suddenly he saw a light breaking into his study, and a sweet smell that came unto him, and this voice he thought he heard—O Augustine! what are you doing? Do you think to put the sea into a little vessel? When the heavens shall cease from their continual motion, then shall you be able to understand what the glory of heaven is—and not before!

Nicephorus speaks of one Agbarus, a great man, that hearing so much of Christ's fame, by reason of the miracles he wrought, sent a painter to take his picture, and that the painter when he came was not able to do it, because of that radiance and divine splendor which sat on Christ s face. Such is the splendor, the brightness, the glory, the happiness, and blessedness—which is reserved for the saints in heaven—that had I all the tongues of men on earth, and all the excellencies of the angels in heaven—yet I would not be able to conceive, nor to express that vision of glory to you! It is best to be hastening there, that we may feel and enjoy that which we shall never be able to declare!

(5.) Fifthly, **Your afflictions are not great, if compared with the afflictions and torments of many of the damned, who when they were it this world, never sinned at so high a rate as you have done!** Doubtless there are many now in hell, who never sinned against such clear light as you have done, nor against such special love as you have done, nor against such choice means as you have done, nor against such precious mercies as you have done, nor against such singular remedies as you have done. Certainly there are many now a-roaring in everlasting burnings, who never sinned against such deep convictions of conscience as you have done, nor against such close and strong reasonings of the Spirit as you have done, nor against such free offers of mercy and rich tenders of grace as you have done, nor against such sweet wooings and multiplied entreaties of a bleeding dying Savior as you have done; therefore remain silent before the Lord. What are your afflictions, your torments—to the torments of the damned, whose torments are numberless, bottomless, remediless, and endless! Whose pains are without intermission of mitigation; who have **weeping** served for the first course, and **gnashing of teeth** for the second course, and the **gnawing worm** for the third course, and **intolerable pain** for the fourth course! Yet the pain of the body is but the body of pain; **the very soul of sorrow and pain** is the soul's sorrow and pain. The everlasting alienation and separation from God is served for the fifth course!

Ah, Christian! how can you seriously think on these things and not lay your hand upon your mouth—even when you are under the greatest sufferings? Your sins have been far greater than many of those who are now in hell, and **your 'great' afflictions are but a flea-bite compared to theirs**! Therefore hush your murmuring, and be silent before the Lord!

(6.) Sixthly and lastly, **If your afflictions are so great; then what madness and folly will it be for you to make them greater by murmuring!** Every act of murmuring will but add load unto load, and burden to burden. The Israelites under great afflictions fell a-murmuring, and their murmuring proved their utter ruin, as you may see in that Num. 14. Murmuring will but put God upon heating the furnace seven times hotter; therefore remain silent before the Lord! 1 Cor. 10:11. But of this I have spoken sufficiently already.

Object. 6. **Oh! but MY afflictions are greater than other men's afflictions are**; and how then can I be silent? Oh! there is no affliction like **my** affliction! How can I not murmur? I answer,

(1.) First, **It may be your sins are greater than other men's sins**, Jer. 3:6-12. If you have sinned against more light, more love, more mercies, more experiences, more promises, than others—no wonder if your afflictions are greater than others! If this be your case, you have more cause to be mute than to murmur; and certainly, if you do but seriously look into *the black book of your conscience*, you will find greater sins there than any you can charge upon any person or people on earth! If you should not, I think you would justly incur the censure which that sour philosopher passed upon grammarians, that is—that they were better acquainted with the evils of Ulysses than with their own. Never complain that your afflictions are greater than others', except you can evidence that your sins are lesser than others.

(2.) Secondly, **It may be you are under some present mental distemper, which disenables you to make a right judgment of the different dealings of God with yourself and others.** When the mind is distempered, and the brain troubled, many things seem to be that are not; and then little things seem very great. Oh! the strange passions, the strange imaginations, the strange conclusions, that attend a distempered judgment! I have read of a foolish emperor, who, to show the greatness of his city, made show of many spiders.

When the mind is disturbed, men many times **say** they know not that, and **do** they know not what. It may be, when these clouds are blown over, and your mind cleared, and your judgment settled, you will be of another opinion. The supplicant woman appealed from *drunken* king Philip—to *sober* king Philip. It is good to appeal from a distempered mind to a clear composed mind, for that is the way to make a righteous judgement of all the righteous dispensations of God, both towards ourselves and towards others.

(3.) Thirdly, **It may be that the Lord sees that it is very needful that your afflictions should be greater than others.** It may be your heart is **harder** than other men's hearts, and **prouder** and stouter than other men's hearts, it may be your heart is more **impure** than others, and more **carnal** than others, or else more **selfish** and more **worldly** than others, or else more deceitful and more **hypocritical** than others, or else more **cold** and careless than others, or more formal and **lukewarm** than others. Now, if this is your case, certainly God sees it very necessary, for the breaking of your hard heart, and the humbling of your proud heart, and the cleansing of your foul heart, and the spiritualizing of your carnal heart, etc., that your afflictions should be greater than others; and therefore do not murmur.

Where the disease is strong, the remedy must be strong—else the cure will never be wrought. God is a wise physician, and he would never give strong medicine if a weaker one could effect the cure, Jer. 30:11, and 46:28; Isaiah 27:8. The more rusty the nail is, the oftener we put it into the fire to purify it; and the more crooked it is, the more blows and the harder blows we give to straighten it. You have been long a-gathering rust; and therefore, if God deal thus with you, you have no cause to complain.

(4.) Fourthly, **Though your afflictions are greater than this and that particular man's afflictions, yet doubtless there are many thousands in the world whose afflictions are greater than yours.** Can you seriously consider the sore calamities and miseries that the **devouring sword** has brought upon many thousand Christians in foreign parts—and say that your afflictions are greater than theirs? Surely not! Pliny, in his Natural History, writes that the nature of the basilisk is to kill all trees and shrubs it breathes upon, and to scorch and burn all herbs and grass it passes over. Such are the dismal effects of war. The sword knows no difference between the godly and the ungodly, between the innocent and the guilty, between young and old, between bond and free, between male and female, between the precious and the vile, between the prince and the subject, between the nobleman and the beggar. The sword eats the flesh and drinks the blood of all sorts of people, without putting any difference between one or the other. The poor Christians in Poland, Denmark, Germany, and several other parts, have found it so; many of their wounds are not healed to this day. Who can retain in his fresh and bleeding memory the dreadful work that the sword of war has made in this nation, and not say, Surely many thousands have been greater sufferers than myself; they have resisted unto blood—but so have not I, Heb. 12:4. But,

(5.) Fifthly, **As your afflictions are greater than other men's—so it may be your MERCIES are greater than other men's mercies**; and if so, you have no cause to complain—but to remain silent before the Lord. As Job's afflictions were greater than other men's, so his mercies were greater than other men's; and Job wisely sets one against another, and then lays his hand upon his mouth, Job 1:21, 22. It may be you have had more **health** than others, and more **strength** than others, and more **prosperity** than others, and more **smiling providences** than others, and more **good days** than others, and more sweet and comfortable **relations** than others; and if this be your case, you have much cause to be mute, you have no cause to murmur. If now your *winter nights* are longer than others, remember your *summer days* have formerly been longer than others; and therefore remain silent before the Lord. But,

(6.) Sixthly and lastly, **By great afflictions the Lord may greaten your graces**, and greaten your name and fame in the world, James 5:10, 11. By **Job's** great afflictions, God did greaten his faith, and greaten his patience, and greaten his integrity, and greaten his wisdom and knowledge, and greaten his experience, and greaten his name and fame in the world—as you all know who have but read his book. Bonds and afflictions waited on **Paul** in every city, Acts 20:23, 2 Cor. 11; his afflictions and sufferings were very great—but by them the Lord greatened his spirit, his zeal, his courage, his confidence, his resolution, and his name and fame, both among sinners and saints. Certainly, if you are dear to Christ, he will greaten you in spirituals—by all the great afflictions which are upon you; he will raise your faith, and inflame your love, and quicken your hope, and brighten your zeal, and perfect your patience, and perfume your name, and make it like a precious ointment, 'like a precious ointment poured forth', Prov. 22:1, Eccles. 7:1; so that good men shall say, and bad men shall say, 'Lo, here is a Christian indeed! Here is a man more worth than the gold of Ophir!' Therefore, remain silent before the Lord, though your afflictions are greater than others.

Object. 7. **I would be silent—but my outward affliction is attended with sore TEMPTATIONS**; God has not only outwardly afflicted me—but Satan is let loose to buffet me; and therefore how can I be silent? how can I hold my peace, now I am fallen under manifold temptations? To this I answer:

(1.) First, **No man is the less loved by God, because he is tempted.** No! Those whom God loves best—are usually tempted most, Eph. 6:12. Witness David, Job, Joshua, Peter, Paul, yes, Christ himself—who, as he was beloved above all others, so he was tempted above all others! He was tempted to question his Sonship; he was tempted to the worst idolatry, even to worship the devil himself; to the greatest infidelity, to distrust his Father's providence, and to use unlawful means for necessary supplies; and to self-murder, 'Cast yourself down,' etc.

Those who were once glorious on earth, and are now triumphing in heaven—have been severely tempted and assaulted by Satan. It is as natural and common for the choicest saints to be tempted—as it is for the sun to shine, the bird to fly, the fire to burn. The eagle complains not of her wings, nor the peacock of her train of feathers, nor the nightingale of her voice—because these are natural to them. No more should saints of their temptations, because they are natural to them. Our whole life, says Augustine, is nothing but a temptation; **the best men have been the worst tempted**; therefore, remain silent before the Lord.

(2.) Secondly, **Temptations which are resisted and bewailed—will never hurt you, nor harm you.** Distasteful temptations seldom or never prevail. So long as the soul distastes them and the will remains firmly averse against them—they can do no hurt. So long as the language of the soul is, 'Get behind me, Satan!' Mat. 16:23, the soul is safe. It is not Satan tempting—but my assenting; it is not his enticing—but my yielding; which undoes me. Temptations may be troubles to my mind—but they are not sins upon my soul—while I am in arms against them. If your heart trembles and your flesh quakes when Satan tempts—your condition is safe enough. If Satan's temptations are your greatest afflictions—his temptations shall never conquer you nor harm you. Therefore, if this be your case, remain silent before the Lord.

(3.) Thirdly, **Temptations are rather hopeful evidences that your estate is good, that you are dear to God, and that it shall go well with you forever, than otherwise. God had but one Son without corruption—but he had none without temptation**, Heb. 2:17, 18. Pirates make the fiercest assaults upon those vessels which are most richly laden; so does Satan upon those souls that are most richly laden with the treasures of grace, with the riches of glory. Pirates let empty vessels pass and repass, without assaulting them; so does Satan let souls that are empty of God, of Christ, of the Spirit, of grace, pass and repass without tempting or assaulting of them. When nothing will satisfy the soul—but a full departure out of Egypt, from the bondage and slavery of sin, and that the soul is firmly resolved upon a march for Canaan; then Satan, Pharaoh-like, will furiously pursue after the soul with horses and chariots, that is—with a whole army of temptations Exod. 14:9.

Well! a tempted soul when it is worst with him, may safely argue thus—"If God were not my friend, Satan would not be so much my enemy; if there were not something of God within me, Satan would never make such attempts to storm me; if the love of God were not set upon me, Satan would never shoot so many fiery darts to wound me; if the heart of God were not towards me, the hand of Satan would not be so strong against me." When Beza was tempted, he made this answer, "Whatever I was, Satan, I am now 'in Christ a new creature', and that is it which troubles you; now I see that you envy me the grace of my Savior."

Satan's malice to tempt, is no sufficient ground for a Christian to dispute God's love and acceptance upon. If it were, there is no saint on earth that would quietly possess divine favor a week, a day, an hour. The jailer is quiet, when his prisoner is in bolts—but if he has escaped, then he pursues him with haste and furry. You knew how to apply it. Men do not hate the picture of a toad; the wolf does not pounce upon a painted sheep; no more does Satan much disturb those he has in chains! Therefore remain silent before the Lord, though you are inwardly tempted, as well as outwardly afflicted.

(4.) Fourthly, **While Satan is tempting of you, Christ in the court of glory is interceding for you**—Luke 22:31, 32, 'And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he no sift you as wheat—but *I have prayed for you*, that your faith fail not!' Satan would gladly have been shaking of him up and down, as wheat is shaken in a sieve; but Christ's intercession frustrates Satan's designed temptations. **Whenever Satan stands at our elbow to tempt us—Christ stands at his Father's to intercede for us!** "Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them!" Hebrews 7:25.

Some think that Christ intercedes only by virtue of his merits; others think that it is done only with his mouth; probably it may be done both ways. Is it likely, that that mouth which pled for us on earth, (John 17) should be altogether silent for us in heaven? Christ is a person of highest honor; he is the greatest favorite in the court of heaven; he always stands between us and danger. If there be any evil plotted or designed against us by Satan, the great accuser of the brethren—Christ foresees it, and by his intercession prevents it. When Satan puts in his pleas and commences suit upon suit against us, Christ still undertakes our cause; he answers all his pleas, and non-suits Satan at every turn; and in despite of hell he preserves us in divine favor.

When Satan pleads, 'Lord! here are such and such sins that your children have committed! and here are such and such duties which they have omitted! and here are such and such mercies which they have not improved! and here are such and such ordinances which they have slighted! and here are such and such motions of the Spirit which they have quenched!' Divine justice answers, 'All this is true—but Christ has appeared on their behalf; he has pleaded their cause; be has fully and fairly answered whatever has been objected and given complete satisfaction to the utmost farthing! So there is no accusation nor condemnation which can stand in force against them!' "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us!" Romans 8:33-34

Christ's intercession should be the soul's anchor-hold in time of temptation. In the day of your temptation you need not be overly troubled or disturbed—but in peace and patience possess your own soul; considering what a friend you have in the court of glory, and how he is most active for you—when Satan is most busy in tempting of you.

(5.) Fifthly and lastly, **All temptations that the saints meet with, shall work much for their good; they shall be much for their gain.** The profit and advantage that will redound to tempted souls by all their temptations is very great, Rom. viii 28, Lam. 1:12. Now this will appear to be a most certain truth, by an induction of particulars thus:

[1.] First, **By temptations God multiples and increases his children's spiritual experiences, the increase of which is better than the increase of gold.** In the *school of temptation*, God gives his children the greatest experience of his **power** supporting them, of his **word** comforting of them, of his **mercy** warming of them, of his **wisdom** counseling of them, of his **faithfulness** joying of them, and of his **grace** strengthening of them—2 Cor. 12:9, 'My grace shall be sufficient for you.' Paul never experienced so deeply what almighty power was, what the everlasting arms of mercy were, and what infinite grace and goodness was—as when he was under the buffetings of Satan.

[2.] Secondly, **All their temptations shall be medicinal; their temptations shall be happy preventions of great abominations**—2 Cor. 12:7, 'Lest I should be exalted, lest I should be exalted.' It is twice in that one verse; he begins with it, and he ends with it. If he had not been buffeted, he might have been more proud in his own conceit than he was before in his ecstasy. Ah, tempted souls! you say you are nothing, very nothing—but had it not been for the *school of temptation*, you might have been stark nothing before this time! You say you are sick, you are even sick to death. Why, your sickness had before this time killed you, had not temptations been medicinals to you. You are bad under temptations; but doubtless you would have been much worse had not God made temptation medicinal to you.

[3.] Thirdly, **Temptation shall much promote the exercise of grace.** As the spring in the watch sets all the wheels a-going, and as Solomon's virtuous woman set all her maidens to work—so temptation sets faith to work, and love on work, and repentance to work, and hope to work, and holy fear to work, and godly sorrow to work! As the wind sets the mill to work—so the *wind of temptations* sets the graces of the saints a-going. Now **faith** runs to Christ, now it hugs a promise, now it pleads the blood of Christ, now it looks to the recompense of reward, now it takes the sword of the Spirit! Now **love** cleaves to Christ, now love hangs upon Christ, now love will fight it out to the death for Christ! Now **hope** flies to the horns of the sanctuary, now hope puts on her helmet, now hope casts her anchor upon that which is within the veil! Grace is never more active, than when a Christian is most tempted.

Satan made a bow of Job's wife; and shot a temptation by her at **Job**, thinking to have shot him to the heart—'Curse God, and die!' But the activity of Job's graces was a breastplate which made him temptation-proof. The devil, tempting Bonaventure, told him he was a reprobate, and therefore persuaded him to drink in the present pleasures of this life; for, said he, you are excluded from the future joys with God in heaven. Bonaventure's graces being active, he answered, No! Not so, Satan—if I must not enjoy God after this life, let me enjoy him as much as I can in this life.

[4.] Fourthly, **By temptations the Lord will make you the more serviceable and useful to others.** None so fit and able to **relieve** tempted souls, to **sympathize** with tempted souls, to **support** tempted souls, to **counsel** tempted souls, to **pity** tempted souls, to **nourish** tempted souls, to **bear with** tempted souls, and to **comfort** tempted souls—as those who have been in *the school of temptations!* "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God." 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.

By temptations God trains up his servants, and fits and capacitates them to support and shelter their fellow-brethren. One tempted Christian, says Luther, is more profitable and useful to other Christians than a hundred—I may add, than a thousand—who have not known the depths of Satan—who have not been in the school of temptation. He who is *a master of arts in the school of temptation* has learned an art to comfort, to support, and gently to handle tempted and distressed souls, infinitely beyond what all human arts can reach unto. No doctor to him that has been a doctor in the school of temptation; all other doctors are but illiterate dunces compared to him.

[5.] Fifthly, It **is an honor to the saints to be tempted, and in the outcome to have an honorable conquest over over the tempter.** It was a great honor to David that he should be put to fight hand to hand with Goliath, and in the outcome to overcome him, 1 Sam. 17; but it was far greater honor to Job and Paul, that they should be put to combat in the open field with Satan himself, and in the end to gain a famous conquest over him, as they did, Job 1; 2 Cor. 12:7-10. It was a very great honor to David's three mighty men, that in jeopardy of their lives they broke through the army of the Philistines, to bring water to David out of the well of Bethlehem, and did effect it in spite of all the strength and power of their enemies, though it were to the extremest hazard of their blood and lives, 2 Sam. 23:13-18; but it is a far greater honor to the saints to be furnished with a spirit of strength, courage, and valor, to break through an army of temptations, and in the end to triumph over them! Rom. 8:13-18. And yet this honor have all the saints—1 Cor. 10:13, 'But God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it.' Rom. 16:20, 'And the God of peace shall tread Satan under your feet shortly.' 1 John 2:14, 'I have written unto you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.' 1 John 5:18, 'We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin'—nor does he sin as other men do—delightfully, greedily, customarily, resolvedly, impenitently, etc. 'But he who is begotten of God keeps himself, and the evil one cannot harm him.'

The glorious victory that the people of God had over Pharaoh and his great army, Exod. 14, was a figure of the glorious victory that the saints shall obtain over Satan and his instruments, which is clear from Rev. 15:3, where we have the song of Moses and of the Lamb. But why the song of Moses and of the Lamb—but to hint this to us, that the overthrow of Pharaoh was a figure of the overthrow of Satan? And the triumphal song of Moses was a figure of that song which the saints shall sing for their overthrow of Satan. As certainly as Israel overcame Pharaoh, so certainly shall every true Israelite overcome Satan. The Romans were beaten in many minor skirmishes, but never were overcome in a set war; in the long run they overcame all their enemies. Though a Christian may lie beaten by Satan in some particular skirmishes, yet at the long run he is sure of an honorable conquest. God puts a great deal of honor upon a poor soul when he brings him into the open field to fight it out with Satan. By fighting, he overcomes, he gains the victory, he triumphs over Satan, and leads captivity captive. Augustine gives this reason why God permitted Adam at first to be tempted, that is—that he might have had the more glory in resisting and withstanding Satan's temptation. It is the glory of a Christian to be made strong to resist, and to have his resistance crowned with a happy conquest.

[6.] Sixthly, **By temptations the Lord will make his people more frequent and more abundant in the work of prayer.** Every temptation proves a strong alarm to prayer. When Paul was in the school of temptation, he prayed thrice, that is, often, 1 Cor. 12:8, 9. Days of temptation—are days of great supplication. Christians usually pray most—when they are tempted most. They are most busy with God—when Satan is most busy with them. A Christian is most upon his knees—when Satan stands most at his elbow.

Augustine was a man much tempted—and a man much in prayer. Holy prayer, says he, is a shelter to the soul, a sacrifice to God, and a scourge to the devil.

Luther was a man under manifold temptations, and a man much in prayer. He is said to have spent three hours every day in prayer. He used to say that **prayer was the best book in his study**.

Chrysostom was much in the school of temptation, and delighted much in prayer. Oh! says he, it is more bitter than death to be spoiled of prayer, and hereupon, as he observes, Daniel chose rather to run the hazard of his life than to lose his prayer. But,

[7.] Seventhly, **By temptations the Lord will make his people more and more conformable to the image of his Son.** Christ was much tempted, he was often in the school of temptation; and the more a Christian is tempted, the more into the likeness of Christ he will be transformed. Of all men in the world, tempted souls do most resemble Christ to the life, in meekness, lowliness, holiness, heavenliness, etc. The image of Christ is most fairly stamped upon tempted souls. **Tempted souls are much in looking up to Jesus—and every gracious look upon Christ changes the soul more and more into the image of Christ.** Tempted souls experience much of the succouring of Christ, and the more they experience the sweet of the succourings of Christ—the more they grow up into the likeness of Christ. **Temptations are the tools by which the Father does more and more carve, form, and fashion his precious saints into the similitude and likeness of his dearest Son.**

[8.] Eighthly and lastly, take many things in one; **by temptations, God makes sin more hateful, and the world less delightful, and relations less hurtful.** By temptations, God discovers to us our own weakness and the creature's insufficiency in the hour of temptation to help us or support us. By temptations, God will brighten our Christian armor, and make us stand more upon our Christian watch, and keep us closer to a succouring Christ. By temptations, the Lord will make his ordinances to be more highly prized, and heaven to be more earnestly desired. Now seeing that temptations shall work so eminently for the saints' good, why should not Christians be mute and silent? why should they not hold their peace, and lay their hands upon their mouths, though their afflictions are attended with great temptations?

"Mute Christian under the Smarting Rod" or,
"The Silent Soul with Sovereign Antidotes"

by Thomas Brooks, 1659, London.

> "I was silent; I would not open my mouth, for
> You are the one who has done this!" Psalm 39:9

Objection 8. **Oh! But God has deserted me! He has forsaken me!** He who should comfort my soul—stands afar off! How can I be silent? The Lord has hid his face away from me; clouds are gathered around me; God has turned his back upon me! How can I be silent?

Supposing that the desertion is real, and not in appearance only, as sometimes it falls out—I answer,

(1.) First, **It has been the common lot, portion, and condition of the choicest saints in this world, to be deserted and forsaken by God**, Psalm 30:6, 7; Psalm 77:6, and 88:6; Job 23:8, 9; Cant. 3:1-4, 5:6, 7; Isaiah 8:17; Micah 7:7-9. If God deals no worse with you than he has dealt with his most bosom friends, with his choicest jewels—you have no reason to complain. But,

(2.) Secondly, **God's forsaking of you is only partial, it is not total**, Psalm. 9:4; Gen. 49:23, 24. God may forsake his people in part—but he never wholly forsakes them; he may forsake them in respect of his quickening presence, and in respect of his comforting presence—but he never forsakes them in respect to his supporting presence; 2 Cor. 12:9, 'My grace is sufficient for you; for my strength is made perfect in weakness;' Psalm 37:23, 24, 'The steps of a godly man are ordered by the Lord; and he delights in his way. Though he falls, he shall not be utterly cast down—for the Lord upholds him with his hand." God's supporting hand of grace is still under his people—Psalm 63:8, ' My soul follows hard after you—your right hand upholds me.' Christ has always one hand to uphold his people, and another hand to embrace them, Cant. 2:16. The everlasting arms of God are always underneath his people, Deut. 33:27. And this the saints have always found; witness David, Heman, Asaph, Job, etc.

Geographers write that the city of Syracuse, in Sicily, is so curiously situated that the sun is never out of sight. Though the children of God sometimes are under some clouds of afflictions, yet the Sun of mercy, the Sun of righteousness, is never quite out of sight. But,

(3.) Thirdly, **Though God has forsaken you—his love abides and continues constant to you.** He loves you with an everlasting love—Jer. 31:8, 'Where he loves, he loves to the end.' John 13:1. "But Zion said—'The Lord has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me!' Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands!" Isaiah 49:14-16. Look, as people engrave the mark, name, or picture of those whom they dearly love and entirely affect, upon some stone which they wear at their bosoms, or upon some ring which they wear or their finger, so has God engraved Zion upon the palms of his hands; she was still in his eye, and always dear to his heart, though she did not think so.

As Joseph's heart was full of love to his brethren, even then when he spoke roughly to them, and withdrew himself from them—for he must go aside and ease his heart by weeping; so the heart of God is full of love to his people, even then when he seems to be most displeased with them, and to turn his back upon them. Though God's dispensations may be changeable towards his people, yet his gracious disposition is unchangeable towards them, Mal. 3:6. When God puts the blackest veil of all upon his face, yet then his heart is full of love to his people—then his affections are yearning towards them—Jer. 31:18-20, 'Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For though I spoke against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my heart yearns for him—I will surely have mercy upon him, says the Lord.' The mother's affections cannot more yearn after the tender babe than God does after his distressed ones.

As Moses' mother, when she had put him into the ark of bulrushes, Exod. 2, wept to see the babe weep, and when she was turned from him, she could not but cast a weeping eye of love towards him; so when God turns aside from his people, yet he cannot but cast an eye of love towards them—Hos. 11:1, 'How shall I give you up, O Ephraim!' etc. Here are four different 'hows' in the text—the like not to be found in the whole book of God. I am even at a stand, justice calls for vengeance—but mercy interposes; my affections yearn, my heart melts—oh, how shall I give you up? Oh, I cannot give you up! I will not give you up! God's love is always like himself, unchangeable; his love is everlasting; it is a love which never decays nor waxes cold; it is like the stone albestos, of which Solinus writes that being once made hot—it can never be cooled again.

(4.) Fourthly, **Though your Lord has hid his face from you—yet certainly you have his secret presence with you.** God is present when he is seemingly absent—'The Lord was in this place, and I knew it not,' says Jacob, Gen. 28:16. The sun many times shines when we do not see it, and the husband is many times in the house when the wife does not know it. God is in your house, he is in your heart; though you see him not, you feel him not, though you hear him not—Heb. 13:5, 'I will never leave you, nor forsake you;' or, as it may be rendered according to the Greek, 'I will never leave you, neither will I ever forsake you.'

Are you not now drawn out to prize God and Christ, and his love above all the world? Yes! Are you not now drawn out to give the Lord many a secret visit, in a corner, behind the door, Cant. 2:14, in some dark hole where none can see you nor hear you, but the Lord? Psalm 13:1-3, 63:1-3. Yes! Are there not strong breathings, partings, and longings after a clearer vision of God, and after a fuller fruition of God? Yes! Are you not more affected and afflicted with the withdrawings of Christ than you are with the greatest afflictions which ever befell you? Cant. 5:6. Yes!

Augustine, upon that answer of God to Moses, 'You cannot see my face and live,' Exod. 33:20, makes this quick and sweet reply, 'Then, Lord! let me die, that I may see your face.' Do you not often tell God that there is no punishment to the punishment of loss of God's presence, and no hell to that of being forsaken of God? Psalm 30:6, 7. Yes! Do you not find a secret power in your soul, drawing you forth to struggle with God, to lay hold on God, and patiently to wait on God, until he shall return unto you, and lift up the light of his countenance upon you? Yes! Well, then, you may be confident that you have a *secret* and *blessed* presence of God with you; though God, in regard of his *comfortable* presence, may be departed from you.

Nothing below a secret presence of God with a man's spirit will keep him waiting and working until the Sun of righteousness shines upon him, Mal. 4:2. If any vain people should put that deriding question to you, Where is your God? you may safely and boldly answer them, 'My God is here; he is near me, he is round about me, yes, he is in the midst of me—Zeph. 3:17, 'The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty, he will save, he will rejoice over you with joy, he will rest in his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.' The bush, which was a type of the church, consumed not, all the while it burned with fire, because God was in the midst of it. **It is no argument that Christ is not in the ship, because tempests and storms arise!**

(5.) Fifthly, **Though God is gone—yet he will return again.** Though your sun be now set in a cloud—yet it will rise again. Though sorrow may abide for a night—yet joy comes in the morning. A Christian's mourning shall last but until morning—Micah 7:19, 'He will turn again—he will have compassion upon us!' Cant. 3:4, 'It was but a little that I passed from them—but I found him whom my soul loves; I held him, and I would not let him go,' etc.; Psalm 94:19, 'In the multitude of my thoughts within me—your comforts delight my soul.' Isaiah 54:7; 8, 10, "For a brief moment I abandoned you—but with deep compassion I will bring you back. In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment—but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you," says the Lord your Redeemer. "So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again. Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the Lord, who has compassion on you."

God will not allow his whole displeasure to rise upon his people; nor will he forsake them totally or finally. The saints shall taste but some *sips* of the cup of God's wrath, sinners shall drink the *dregs*. Their storm shall end in a calm, and their winter night shall be turned into a summer day.

There was a woman who was thirteen years under desertion by God, which was so vehement, that for the most part of her time she was gladly to keep to her bed through weakness. A godly minister, who was affected with her condition, went to comfort her, and to pray with her; but when he came and offered to do it, she shrieked out, utterly refusing and forbidding him to pray with her, for, said she, I have too many abused mercies to answer for already. Yet he would not be put off—but prayed by her, and so prevailed with God on her behalf, that the next morning she was delivered from all her fears, and had such exceeding joy, that the like has rarely been heard of. The Lord, who had been long withdrawn from her, returned at length in a way of singular mercy to her.

There was another precious woman who was several years deserted by God, and hearing a precious godly minister preach, she suddenly fell down, overwhelmed with joy, crying out, Oh! he is come whom my soul loves! and for several days after, she was filled with such exceeding joys, and had such gracious and singular ravishing expressions so fluently coming from her, that many came to hear the rare manifestations of God's grace in her. The lowest of her pious expressions did exceed the highest that ever the minister had read in the book of martyrs. But,

(6.) Sixthly and lastly, **God's deserting, God's forsaking of his people, shall many ways work for their good.** As,

[1.] First, **God by withdrawing from his people, will prepare and fit them for greater refreshings, manifestations, and consolations.** Psalm 71:11, 20, 21, 'God has forsaken him—persecute and take him; for there is none to deliver him.' But shall this forlorn condition work for his good? Yes, 'You who have showed me great and sore troubles, shall quicken me again, and shall bring me up again from the depths of the earth. You shall increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.' When Joseph's brethren were in their greatest distress—then Joseph makes known himself most fully to them, Gen. 14:2-4; so does Christ, our spiritual Joseph, to his people. Hudson the martyr, deserted at the stake, went from under his chain, and having prayed earnestly, was comforted immediately, and suffered valiantly.

[2.] **By God's withdrawing from his people—he prevents his people's withdrawing from him; and so by an affliction he prevents sin.** For God to withdraw from me is but my affliction—but for me to withdraw from God, that is my sin, Heb. 10:38, 39. Therefore it were better for me that God should withdraw a thousand times from me—than that I should once withdraw from God. God therefore forsakes us—that we may not forsake our God. God sometimes hides himself that we may cleave the closer to him, and hang the faster upon him; as the mother hides herself from the child for a time, that the child may cleave the closer and hang the nearer upon her all the day long. God sometimes hid himself from David—Psalm 30:7, 'You hid your face, and I was troubled', I was all dejected. Well! and is that all? No! ver. 8, 'I cried to you, O Lord, and unto the Lord I made my supplication.' Now he cries louder, and cleaves closer to God than ever. So in that Psalm 43:1, 2, 'O God, you are my God! early will I seek you—my soul thirsts for you, my flesh longs for you in a dry and thirsty land, where there is no water; to see your power and your glory, so as I have seen you in your sanctuary.' Well! And how do those withdrawings of God work? Why! this you may see in ver. 8, 'My soul follows hard after you', or as the Hebrew reads it, 'My soul cleaves after you.' Look! as the husband cleaves to his wife, so does my soul cleave to the Lord. The psalmist now follows God even hard at heels, as we say. But

[3.] Thirdly, **The Lord, by withdrawing from his people, will enhance and raise the price, and commend the worth, excellency, sweetness, and usefulness of several precious promises, which otherwise would be but as dry breasts, and us useless weapons to the soul**, 2 Peter 1:4. As in Micah 7, 'He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us.' Isaiah 54:7, 8; Heb. 13:5, 6; Heb. 2:3; Psalm 5:12, 'For you, Lord will bless the righteous; with favor you will compass him,' or crown him, 'as with a shield.' The Lord will compass the righteous about with his favor, as the crown compasses the head, as the Hebrew imports. Psalm 112:4, 'Unto the upright there arises light in darkness—he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.' Jer. 31:37, 'This is what the Lord says: Only if the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth below be searched out, will I reject all the descendants of Israel because of all they have done' As surely as heaven cannot be measured, nor the foundations of the earth searched by the skill or power of any mortal man—so sure and certain it is, that God will not utterly cast off his people, no—not for all the evil which they have done!

Now at what a rate does a deserted soul value these precious promises? Well! says he, these promises are sweeter than the honey or the honey-comb; they are more precious than gold, than fine gold, than much gold, than all the gold in the world! I prefer them before my food, before my delightful food, yes, before my necessary food, before my appointed portion!

As Alexander laid up Homer's Iliad in a cabinet embroidered with gold and pearls; so deserted souls will lay up these precious promises in the cabinet of their hearts, as the choicest treasure the world affords. Dolphins, they say, love music, so do deserted souls the music of the promises. That promise, 1 Tim. 1:15, was music to Bilney the martyr; and that promise, John 10:29, was music to Ursinus; and that promise, Isaiah 57:15, was music to another; and that promise, Isaiah 26:3, was music to another; and that to another Mat. 11:28, etc. Promises that are suited to a deserted man's condition make the sweetest music in his ear, and are the most sovereign cordials to bear up the spirits—which God can give—or heaven afford—or the soul desire! Deut. 32:13, 'He made him to ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the fruits of the field; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock.' Ah! the honey, the oil—which deserted souls suck of such promises which speak home and close to their conditions!

[4.] Fourthly, **By God's hiding his face and withdrawing himself from you, you will be enabled, more feelingly, and more experimentally to sympathize with others**, and to have compassion on others who are or may be in the dark, and forsaken of God, as you are, Heb. 5:2. Heb. 13:2, 'Remember those who are in bonds, as bound with them; and those who suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.' It is observed of the bees, that when one is sick—they all mourn; and of the sheep, that if one of them is faint—the rest of the flock will stand between it and the sun until it is revived. In the natural body, if one member grieves and is in pain—all suffer with it. When a thorn has stuck into the foot—how does the back bow, and the eyes cry, and the hands go to pluck the thorn out! None so compassionate towards deserted souls as those who have been deserted and forsaken of God themselves. Oh! they know what an evil and a bitter thing it is to be left and forsaken of God, and therefore their affections, their compassions run out much to such, yes, most to such. They know that there is no affliction, no misery, no hell—to that of being forsaken of God.

Anaxagoras, seeing himself old and forsaken by the world, laid himself down, and covered his head, determining to starve himself to death with hunger. But, alas! what is it to be forsaken of the world—to a man's being forsaken of God? Were there as many worlds as there are men in the world, a man were better be forsaken by them all—than to be forsaken by God. There is a great truth in that saying of Chrysostom, that is, That the torments of a thousand hells, it there were so many, come far short of this one, to wit, to be turned out of God's presence with an, 'I know you not!' Mat. 7:23. What a grief was it to Absalom to see the king's face clouded; and how sadly were Eli and his daughter affected with the loss of the ark, which was but a *testimony* of God's presence! But oh! how much more is a Christian afflicted with the loss of the face and favor of God, the remembrance of which makes his heart to melt?

[5.] Fifthly, **Hereby the Lord will teach his people to set a higher price upon his face and favor, when they come to enjoy it again.** Cant. 3:4, 'I found him whom my soul loves; I held him, and I would not let him go!' etc. No man sets so high a price upon Christ, as he who has lost him and found him again. Jesus in the Chinese language, signifies the rising sun, and so he is, Mal. 4:2, especially to souls that have been long clouded. The poor northern nations of Strabo, who lack the light of the sun for some months together, when the term of his return approaches, they climb up into the highest mountains to spy it, and he who spies it first was accounted the best and most beloved of God, and usually they did choose him king; at such a rate did they prize the return of the sun.

Ah! so it is with a poor soul, that for some months, years, has been deserted; oh, how highly does he prize and value the Sun of righteousness—his returning to him, and shining upon him! Psalm 113:3, 'Your loving-kindness is better than life,' or, 'better than lives,' as the Hebrew has it. Divine favor is better than life; it is better that life with all its revenues, with all its comforts, honors, riches, pleasures, applause, etc., yes, it is better than many lives put together! Now you know at what a high rate men value their lives; they will bleed, sweat, cry, part with an estate, yes, with a limb; yes part with their limbs to preserve their lives! As he cried out, Give me any deformity, any torment, any misery—just so you spare my life. Now, though life be so dear and precious to a man, yet a deserted soul prizes the returnings of divine favor upon him above life—yes, above many lives. Many men have been weary of their lives, as is evident in Scripture and history; but no man was ever yet found that was weary of the love and favor of God. No man sets so high a price upon the sun as he who has laid in a dark dungeon, etc. But,

[6.] Sixthly, **Hereby the Lord will train up his servants in that precious life of faith, which is the most honorable and the most happy life in all the world**. 2 Cor. 5:7, 'For we walk by faith, and not by sight.' The life of sense, the life of reason, is a low life, a base life. The life of faith is a noble life, a blessed life. When Elisha demanded of the Shunamite what he should do for her, whether he should speak for her to the king or the captain of the army, she answered, 'I dwell among my people,' 2 Kings 4:13; that is, I dwell nobly and happily among my people; I have no need to make any suit to king or captain; and this she accounts her great happiness, and indeed it is; the greatest happiness in this world to live much in the exercise of faith. **No man lives so free a life, so holy a life, so heavenly a life, so happy a life—as he who lives a life of faith.** By divine drawings the soul is put upon hanging upon a naked God, a naked Christ, a naked promise, Isaiah 1. 10; lxiii. 15, 16. Now the soul is put upon the highest and the purest acts of faith, that is, to cleave to God, to hang upon God, and to carry it sweetly and obediently towards God, though he frowns, though he chides, though he strikes, yes, though he kills, Job 13:15. Those are the most excellent and heroic acts of faith that are most abstracted from sense and reason; he who allows his reason to usurp upon his faith, will never be an excellent Christian. He who goes to school to his own carnal reason, has a fool to his schoolmaster; and he who allows his faith to be overruled by his reason, shall never lack woe. Where reason is strongest, faith usually is weakest. But now the Lord, by forsaking of his people for a time, he makes them skillful in the life of faith, which is the choicest and the sweetest life in this world. But,

[7.] Seventhly, **By divine withdrawings, you are made more conformable to Christ your head and husband, who was under spiritual desertion as well as you.** Mat. 27:46, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' Psalm 22:1, 2. There is an hidden emphasis in the Hebrew word—El signifies a strong God; Eli, Eli—My strong God, my strong God. The unity of Christ's person was never dissolved, nor his graces were never diminished. In the midst of this terrible storm his faith fortifies and strengthens itself upon the strength of God, My God, any God; yet in respect of divine protection and divine solace, he was for some time forsaken of his Father. And if this be your case, you are herein but made conformable to your Lord and master; no, you do but sip of that bitter cup of which Christ drank deep; your cloud is no cloud to that which Christ was under. But,

[8.] Eighthly and lastly, **By these transient and partial forsakings, the Lord will exceedingly sweeten the clear, full, constant, and uninterrupted enjoyments of himself in heaven to all his people**, Psalm 71:10, 21. Ah! how sweet and precious was the face and favor of the king to Absalom, after he had for a time been banished, and at length restored to his royal favor again! Onesimus departed from Philemon for a season, that he might receive him forever. So the Lord departs from his people for a time, that they may receive him forever; he hides himself for a season, that his constant presence among his children in glory may be the more sweet and delightful to them, etc.

Objection 9. **Oh! but I am falsely accused and sadly reproached**, and my good name, which should be as dear or dearer to me than my life, is defamed and fly-blown, and things are laid to my charge that I never did, that I never knew, etc.; and how then can I be silent? how can I hold my peace? I cannot forget the proverb—a man's eye and his good name can bear no jests; and how then can I be mute to see men make jests upon my good name? and every day to see men lade it with all the scorn and contempt imaginable, that they may utterly blast it? etc. To this I say,

(1.) First, That **it must be granted that a good name is one of the choicest jewels in a Christian's crown**. Though a great name many times is little worth, yet a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches. It is better to love a good name abroad, than silver or gold laid up in a chest at home. 'A good name is better than precious ointment,' Eccles. 7:1. Precious ointments were greatly in use and highly esteemed of among the Israelites in those eastern parts, they were laid up among the most precious things even in the king's treasury, Isaiah 39:2. Sweet ointments can but affect the smell, and comfort the brain, and delight the outward man; they reach not the best part, the noble part, that is, the soul, the conscience of a Christian; but a good name does both. What is the perfume of the nostrils, compared to the perfume of the heart?

I have read that in some countries they have a certain art of drawing of pigeons to their dove-houses in those countries, by anointing the wings of one of them with sweet ointment, and that pigeon being sent abroad, does, by the fragrance of that ointment, decoy, invite, and allure others to that house, where itself is a domestic. Such is the fragrance of a good name, that it draws other men after the savor thereof. Among all sorts and ranks of men in the world, a good name has an attractive faculty; it is a precious ointment that draws hearers to attend good preachers, patients to attend physicians, clients to attend lawyers, scholars to attend schoolmasters, and customers to attend shopkeepers. "Demetrius, who was well spoken of by everyone," 3rd epistle of John 12. Let a man's good name be but up, and he cannot easily lack anything that men or money can help him to. A good name will bring a man into favor, and keep a man in favor with all who are good.

Whatever commodity you lose, be sure yet to preserve that jewel of a good name. A Christian should be most watchful of his good name, for a good name answers to all things, as Solomon spoke of money. 'If I may but keep a good name, I have wealth enough,' said the heathen Plautus. A Christian should rather forego gold that let go a good name. He who robs a Christian of his good name is a worse thief than he who robs him of his purse—and better deserves a hanging than he, etc. But,

(2.) Secondly, **It must be granted, that a good name once lost, is very hardly recovered again.** A man may more easily recover a lost friend, a lost estate, than a lost name. A good name is like a princely structure, quickly ruined—but long a-rearing. The father of the prodigal could say of his lost son, 'This my son was lost—but is found; he was dead—but is alive,' Luke 15:32; but how few Christians can say, This my good name was lost—but is found; it was dead—but now it lives. As when Orpah once left Naomi, she returned no more to her, Ruth 1:14; so when once a good name leaves a man, it hardly returns to him again. A cracked credit will hardly be soldered anew, new wine is rarely put into old bottles. A man should stand upon nothing more than the credit of his conscience, and the credit of his name.

In Japan, the very children are so zealous of their reputation, that in case you lose a trifle, and say to one of them, Sirrah, I believe you have stolen it; without any pause, the boy will immediately cut off a joint from one of his fingers, and say, Sir, if you say true, I wish my finger may never heal again. Three things a Christian should stiffly labor to maintain—1, the honor of God; 2, the honor of the gospel; 3, the honor of his own name. If once a Christian's good name sets in a cloud, it will be long before it rises again.

(3.) Thirdly, Though all this be true, yet it has been the portion of God's dearest saints and servants to be slandered, reproached, vilified, and falsely accused. Psalm 31:18, 'Let the lying lips be put to silence, which speak grievous things proudly, and contemptuously against the righteous.' How sadly and falsely was Joseph accused by his wanton mistress; David by Doeg and Shimei; Job of hypocrisy, impiety, inhumanity, cruelty, partiality, pride, and irreligion! Was not Naboth accused of speaking blasphemy against God and the king? Did not Haman present the Jews to the king as unruly and rebellious? Esther 3. Was not Elijah accused to be the troubler of Israel, and Jeremiah the trumpet of rebellion; the Baptist a stirrer up of sedition, and Paul a pestilent incendiary? Were not the apostles generally accounted deceivers and deluders of the people, and the offscouring of the world? etc.

Athanasius and Eustathius were falsely accused of adultery. Heresy and treason were charged upon Cranmer, parricide upon Philpot, sedition upon Latimer. As the primitive persecutors usually put Christians into bears' skins and dogs' skins, and then baited them for the lions; so they usually loaded their names and persons with all the reproach, scorn, contempt, and false reports imaginable, and then baited them, and then acted all their malice and cruelty upon them. I think there is no Christian—but sooner or later, first or last, will have cause to say with David, Psalm 35:11, 'False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not;' they charged me with such things whereof I was both innocent and ignorant. It was the saying of one [Hippias], that there was nothing so intolerable as accusation, because there was no punishment ordained by law for accusers, as there was for thieves, although they stole friendship from men, which is the goodliest riches men can have. Well! Christians, seeing it has been the lot of the dearest saints to be falsely accused, and to have their names and reputes in the world reproached and fly-blown—you should remain silent before the Lord, seeing it is no worse with you than it was with them, 'of whom this world was not worthy.' The Rabbis say that the world cannot exist without patient bearing of reproaches. But,

(4.) Fourthly, **Our Lord Jesus Christ was sadly reproached and falsely accused.** His precious name, which deserves to be always written in characters of gold, was often eclipsed before the sun was eclipsed at his death. His sweet name, which was sweeter than all sweets, was often crucified before his body. Oh, the stones of reproach which were frequently rolled upon that name by which we must be saved, if ever we are saved! Oh, the jeers, the scoffs, the scorns that were cast upon that name which alone can bless us! The name of Jesus, says Chrysostom, has a thousand treasures of joy and comfort in it. The name of a Savior, says Bernard, is honey in the mouth, and music in the ear, and a jubilee in the heart. And yet where is the heart that can conceive, or the tongue that can express, how much dung and filth has been cast upon Christ's name; and how many sharp arrows of reproach and scorn has been, and daily, yes, hourly, are, shot by the world at Christ's name and honor? Such ignominious reproaches were cast upon Christ and his name in the time of his life and at his death, that the sun did blush, and masked himself with a cloud, that he might no longer behold them. Mat. 11:19, 'The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a drunkard, a friend of publicans and sinners.' But was he such an one? No—'Wisdom is justified of her children.' Wisdom's children will stand up and justify her before all the world. Mat. 27:63, 'Sir, we remember that that *deceiver* said, while he was yet alive, After three days, I will rise again.' But was he a deceiver of the people? No, he was the faithful and true witness, Rev. 1:5, chapter 3:14. John 7:20, 'The people answered and said, You have a *devil*, who goes about to kill you?' chapter 8:48, The Jews answered him—Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?' chapter 10:20, 'Many of them said—He is demon-possessed and raving mad.'

It was a wonder of wonders that the earth did not open and swallow up these monsters, and that God did not rain hell out of heaven upon these horrid blasphemers; but their blasphemous assertions were denied and disproved by some of wisdom's children—ver. 21, 'Others said, These are not the words of one who has a devil—can a devil open the eyes of the blind?' The devil has no such power, nor any such goodness, as to create eyes to him that was born blind.

Will you yet see more scorn, dirt, and contempt cast upon the Lord of glory? Why, then, cast your eyes upon that—Luke 16:14, 'The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus;' or as the Greek reads it, 'They blew their noses at him in scorn and derision.' The Pharisees did not only laugh, fleer, and jeer at Christ—but they have also external signs of scorn and derision in their countenance and gestures; they blew their noses at him, they contemned him as a thing of nothing. And in chapter 25:35, both people and rulers blew their noses at him; for the original word is the same with that in the fore-mentioned chapter. John 19:12, he is accused for being an enemy to Caesar. Now, who can seriously consider of the scorn, reproach, and contempt that has been cast upon the name and honor of our Lord Jesus—and not sit silent and mute under all the scorn and contempt that has been cast upon his name or person in this world?

(5.) Fifthly, **To be well spoken of by those who are ill spoken of by God; to be in favor with those who are out of favor with God—is rather a reproach than a honor to a man.** Our Savior himself testifies that in the church and nation of the Jews, those who had the most general approbation and applause, they who were most admired and cried up, were the worst—not the best, men; they were the false not the true, prophets—Luke 6:26, 'Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets.' Augustine feared the praises of good men, and detested the praises of evil men. I would not, says Luther, have the glory and fame of Erasmus; my greatest fear is the praises of men. Phocion had not suspected his speech, had not the common people applauded it. Antisthenes suspected some ill in himself, for the vulgar commended him. Socrates always suspected that which passed with the most general commendations. To be praised by evil men, said Bion, is to be praised for evil doing; for the better they speak of a man the worse, and the worse the better. The Lacedaemonians would not have a good saying sullied with a wicked mouth. A wicked tongue soils all the good that drops into it.

It is a mercy to be delivered front the praises of wicked men; wicked men's applauses oftentimes become the saints' reproaches. The heathen Socrates could say—what evil have I done, that this bad man commends me. There is a truth in that saying of Seneca—the worst men are commonly most displeased with that which is best. Who can seriously dwell on these things, and not be mute and silent under all the reproaches and scorn that is cast upon his name and credit in this world?

(6.) Sixthly, **There will come a day when the Lord will wipe off all the dust and filth that wicked men have cast upon the good names of his people.** There shall be a resurrection of names as well as of bodies; their names that are now buried in the open sepulcher of evil throats shall surely rise again. 'Their innocence shall shine forth as the light, and their righteousness as the noon-day', Psalm 37:6. Though the clouds may for a time obscure the shining forth of the sun, yet the sun will shine forth again as bright and glorious as ever—'The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance,' Psalm 112:6. Though the malicious slanders and false accusations of wicked men may for a time cloud the names of the saints, yet those clouds shall vanish, and their names shall appear transparent and glorious. God will take that care of his people's good name—which the infamy, calumnies, and revilement which are cast upon it, shall not long stick.

The Jews rolled a stone upon Christ to keep him down, that he might not rise again—but an angel quickly rolls away the stone, and in despite of his keepers, he rises in a glorious triumphant manner, Mat. 28:2. So though the world may roll this stone and that of reproach and contempt upon the saints' good names, yet God will roll away all those stones; and their names shall have a glorious resurrection in despite of men and devils. That God who has always one hand to wipe away his children's tears from their eyes—that God has always another hand to wipe off the dust that lies upon his children's names. *Wronged innocence* shall not long lie under a cloud. Dirt will not stick long upon marble nor statues of gold!

Well! Christians, remember this, the slanders and reproaches that are cast upon you—they are but badges of your innocence and glory—Job 31:35, 36, 'If my adversary should write a book against me—surely I would take it upon my shoulder, and bind it as a crown to me.' **All reproaches are pearls added to a Christian's crown!** Hence Augustine—he who willingly takes from me my good name, unwillingly adds to my reward! And this Moses knew well enough, which made him prefer Christ's reproach before Pharaoh's crown, Heb. 11:25, 26. That God who knows all his children by name, will not allow their names to be long buried under the ashes of reproach and scorn; and therefore remain silent before the Lord. The more the *foot of pride and scorn* tramples upon your name for the present, the more splendid and radiant it will be, as the more men trample upon a figure engraved in gold, the more lustrous they make it. Therefore lay your hand upon your mouth. But,

(7.) Seventhly, **The Lord has been a swift and a terrible witness against such who have falsely accused his children**, and who have laded their names with scorn, reproach, and contempt, Isaiah 41:2; Jude 15. Ahab and Jezebel, that suborned false witness against Naboth, had their bloods licked up by dogs, 1 Kings 22:21, 22; 2 Kings 9:30. Amaziah, who falsely accused the prophet Amos to the king, met with this message from the Lord—'Your wife will become a prostitute in the city, and your sons and daughters will fall by the sword. Your land will be measured and divided up, and you yourself will die in a pagan country,' Amos 7:17. Haman, who falsely accused the Jews, was one day feasted with the king—and the next day made a feast for crows, Esther 7:10, 9:10. The envious courtiers, who falsely accused Daniel, were devoured by lions, Dan. 6:24. Let me give you a taste of the judgments of God upon such people, out of histories.

Caiaphas the high-priest, who gathered the council and suborned false witnesses against the Lord Jesus, was shortly after put out of office, and one Jonathan substituted in his room, whereupon he killed himself. John Cooper, a godly man, being falsely accused in Queen Mary's days, by one Grimwood, shortly after the said Grimwood, being in perfect health, his bowels suddenly fell out of his body, and so he died miserably.

Narcissus, a godly bishop of Jerusalem, was falsely accused by three men of many foul matters, who sealed up with oaths and imprecations their false testimonies; but shortly after that, one of them, with his whole family and substance, was burnt with fire; another of them was stricken with a grievous disease, such as in his imprecation he had wished to himself; the third, terrified with the sight of God's judgement upon the former, became very penitent, and poured out the grief of his heart ill such abundance of tears, that thereby he became blind.

A wicked wretch Nicephorus, accused Apollonius, a godly Christian, to the judges for certain grievous crimes, which, when he could not prove, he was adjudged to have his legs broken, according to an ancient law of the Romans.

Gregory Bradway falsely accused one Brook; but shortly after, through terrors of conscience, he sought to cut his own throat—but being prevented, he fell mad.

I have read of Socrates' two false accusers, how that the one was trodden to death by the multitude, and the other was forced to avoid the like by a voluntary banishment. I might produce a multitude of other instances—but let these suffice, to evidence how swift and terrible a witness God has been against those who have been false accusers of his people, and who have laded their precious names with scorn and reproach, the serious consideration of which should make the accused and reproached Christian to sit dumb and silent before the Lord.

(8.) Eighthly, and lastly, **God himself is daily reproached.** Men tremble not to cast scorn and contempt upon God himself. Sometimes they charge the Lord that his ways are not equal, that it is a wryly way he goes in, Ezek. 18:25, Jer. 2:5, 6; sometimes they charge God with cruelty, 'My punishment is greater than I am able to bear,' Gen. 4:13; sometimes they charge God with partiality and respect of persons, because here he strokes—and there he strikes; here he lifts up—and there he casts down; here he smiles—and there he frowns; here he gives much—and there he gives nothing; here he loves—and there he hates; here he prospers one—and there he blasts another. Mal. 2:17 'Where is the God of judgment' that is, nowhere; either there is no God of judgment, or at least not a God of exact, precise, and impartial judgment, etc.

Sometimes they charge God with unbountifulness; that he is a God who will give his people too hard work, too much work—but will pay them no wages, nor give them no reward. Mal. 3:14, 'You have said, it is in vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?' Sometimes they charge God that he is a hard master and that he reaps where he has not sown, and gathers where he has not strewed, Mat. 25:24, etc. Oh! the infinite reproach and scorn that is every day, that is every hour in the day—cast upon the Lord, his name, his truth, his ways, his ordinances, his glory!

Alas! all the scorn and contempt that is cast upon all the saints all the world over, is nothing to that which is cast upon the great God every hour; and yet he is patient. Ah! how harshly do most men think of God, and how harshly do they speak of God, and how repulsive do they behave towards God; and yet he bears with it all. Those who will not spare God himself, his name, his truth, his honor; shall we think it much that they spare not us or our names? etc. Surely not. Why should we think that they should give us good words—who cannot afford God a good word from one week's end to another? yes, from one year's end to another? Why should we think that they should cry out 'Hosanna, hosanna!' to us—when as every day they cry out of Christ, 'Crucify him, crucify him!' Mat. 10:25, 'It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord; if they have called the master of the house Beelzebub' (or a master-fly, or a ash-heap god, or the chief devil), 'how much more shall they call those of his household!' It is preferment enough for the servant to be as his Lord; and if they make no bones of staining and blaspheming the name of the Lord, never wonder if they soil your name. And let this suffice to quiet and silence your hearts, Christians, under all that scorn and contempt that is cast upon your names and reputations in this world.

The tenth and last objection is this,

Objection 10. Sir, **In this my affliction I have sought to the Lord for this and that mercy, and still God delays me, and puts me off**; I have several times thought that mercy had been near, that deliverance had been at the door—but now I see it is afar off. How can I then hold my peace? How can I be silent under such delays and disappointments? To this objection, I shall give you these answers.

(1.) First, **The Lord does not always time his answers to the swiftness of his people's expectations.** He who is the God of our mercies—is the Lord of our times. God has delayed long his dearest saints—*times* belonging to him, as well as *outcomes*. Hab. 1:2, 'O How long, Lord, must I call for help and You do not listen, or cry out to You about violence and You do not save?' Job 19:7, 'Behold, I cry out of violence—but I have no answer; I cry—but there is no judgment.' Psalm 19:3, 'I am weary of crying, my throat is dry, my eyes fail while I wait for my God.' Psalm 40:17, 'Make no tarrying, O my God.' Though God had promised him a crown, a kingdom; yet he puts him off from day to day, and for all his haste he must wait for it until the set time has come.

Paul was delayed so long, until he even despaired of life, and had the sentence of death in himself, 2 Cor. 1:8, 9. And Joseph was delayed so long, until the irons entered into his soul, Psalm 105:17-19. So God delayed long, the giving of comfort to Mr. Glover, though he had sought him frequently, earnestly, and denied himself to the death for Christ. Augustine being under convictions, a shower of tears came from him, and casting himself on the ground under a fig tree, he cries out, 'O Lord, how long? How long shall I say, Tomorrow, tomorrow? why not today, Lord, why not today?' Though Abigail made haste to prevent David's fury, and Rahab made haste to hang out her scarlet thread; yet God does not always make haste to hear and save his dearest children. Therefore remain silent before the Lord. **He deals no worse with you, than he has done by his dearest jewels.**

(2.) Secondly, **Though the Lord does defer and delay you for a time, yet he WILL come, and mercy and deliverance shall certainly come.** He will not always forget the cry of the poor. Heb. 10:37, 'For yet a little, little while, and he who shall come will come, and will not tarry.' Hab. 2:3, 'The vision is yet for an appointed time—but at the end it shall speak, and not lie—though it tarry, wait for it.' God will come, and mercy will come; though for the present your sun be set, and your God seems to neglect you, yet your sun will rise again, and your God will answer all your prayers, and supply all your necessities. Psalm 71:20, 21, 'You caused me to experience many troubles and misfortunes, but You will revive me again. You will bring me up again, even from the depths of the earth. You will increase my honor and comfort me once again.'

Three martyrs being brought to the stake, one of them falls down upon the ground, and wrestled earnestly with God for the sense of his love, and God gave it in to him then, and so he came and embraced the stake, and died cheerfully a glorious martyr. God delayed him until he was at the stake, and until he was bound, and then sweetly lets out himself to him.

(3.) Thirdly, **Though God do delays you—yet he does not forget you.** He remembers you still; you are still in his eye, Isaiah 49:14-16, and always upon his heart, Jer. 31:20. He can as soon forget himself, as forget his people, Psalm 77:9, 10. The bride shall sooner forget her bridal ornaments, and the mother shall sooner forget her nursing child, Isaiah 54:7-10, and the wife shall sooner forget her husband, Isaiah 62:3-5 than the Lord shall forget his people. God always knows and remembers his people by name, Gen. 8:1; 19:29-31; 1 Sam. 1:9; Jonah 4:9-11, etc. Therefore be silent, hold your peace; your God has not forgotten you, though for the present he has delayed you.

(4.) Fourthly, **God's time is always the best time—God always takes the best and fittest seasons to do us good.** Isaiah 49:8, 'Thus says the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard you, and in a day of salvation have I helped you.' I could have heard you before, and have helped you before—but I have taken the most acceptable time to do both. To set God his time—is to limit him, Psalm 78:41; it is to exalt ourselves above him, as if we were wiser than God. Though we are not wise enough to improve the times and seasons which God has set us, to serve and honor him in; yet we are apt to think that we are wise enough to set God his time—when to hear, and when to save, and when to deliver. To circumscribe God to our time, and to make ourselves lords of time; what is this, but to divest God of his royalty and sovereignty of appointing times? Acts 1:7, 17:26. It is but just and equal, that that God who has made time, and that has the sole power to appoint and dispose of time, that he should take his own time to do his people good.

We are many times impatient, unreasonable, and hasty—and *now* we must have mercy or we die, deliverance or we are undone. But our impatience will never help us to a mercy, one hour, one moment, before the time that God has set. **The best God will always take the best time to hand out mercies to his people.** There is no mercy so fair, so ripe, so lovely, so beautiful—as that which God gives out in his own time. Therefore remain silent before the Lord; though God delays you, yet be silent, for there is no possibility of wringing a mercy out of God's hand, until the mercy be ripe for us; and we ripe for the mercy! 'There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven. God has made everything beautiful in its time.' Ecclesiastes 3:1, 11.

[6.] Fifthly, **The Lord in this life will certainty recompense, and make his children amends for all the delays and put-offs that he exercises them with in this world**, as he did *Abraham* in giving him such a son as Isaac was; and *Hannah* in giving her a Samuel. He delayed *Joseph* long—but at length he changes his iron fetters into chains of gold, his rags into royal robes, his stocks into a chariot, his prison into a palace, his bed of thorns into a bed of down, his reproach into honor, and his thirty years of suffering into eighty years reigning in much grandeur and glory. So God delayed *David* long—but when his suffering hours were out, he is anointed, and the crown of Israel is set upon his head, and he is made very victorious, very famous and glorious for forty years together, 2 Sam. 1. Well! Christians, God will certainly pay you interest upon interest for all the delays that you meet with; and therefore remain silent before the Lord. But,

[6.] Sixthly and lastly, **The Lord never delays the giving of this mercy, or that deliverance, or the other favor—but upon great and weighty reason**; and therefore remain silent before the Lord.

Quest. But **what are the REASONS that God does so delay and put off his people from time to time**, as we see he does?

Ans. [1.] First, **for the trial of his people, and for the differencing and distinguishing of them from others**. As the furnace tries gold, so delays will try what metal a Christian is made of. Delays will try both the truth and the strength of a Christian's graces. Delays are a Christian touchstone—which will try what metal men are made of, whether they be gold or dross, silver or tin, whether they are sincere or unsound; whether they are real or rotten Christians. As a father, by crossing and delaying his children, tries their disposition and makes a full discovery of them; so that he can say—that child is of a muttering and grumbling disposition, and that it is of an impatient and wayward disposition—but the rest are of a meek sweet, humble, and gentle disposition. So the Lord, by the delaying and crossing of his children, discovers their different dispositions.

The manner of the Psylli, which are a tribe of people of that temper and constitution that no venom will hurt them, is, that if they suspect any child to be none of their own, they set an adder upon it to sting it, and if it cries, and the flesh swells—they cast it away as a spurious child. But if it does not cry, and if it does not swell, then they account it for their own, and make very much of it. So the Lord by delays, which are as the stinging of the adder, tries his children; if they patiently, quietly, and sweetly can bear them, then the Lord still own them, and make much of them, as those that are near and dear unto him. But if under delays they fall a-crying, roaring, storming, vexing, and fretting—the Lord will not own them—but reckon them as bastard children, and not sons, Heb. 12:8.

[2.] Secondly, **That they may have the greater experience of God's power, grace, love, and mercy in the end.** Christ loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus; yet he defers his coming for several days, and Lazarus must die, be put in the grave, and lie there until he reeks. And why so—but that they might have the greater experience of his power, grace, and love towards them! John 11:3, 5, 6, 17.

[3.] Thirdly, **To sharpen his children's spiritual appetite**, and to put a greater edge upon their desires; to make them cry out as a woman in travail, or as a man who is in danger of drowning, Cant. 3:1-4; Isaiah 26:8, 9, 16. God delays, that his people may flee to him with greater strength and importunity. He puts them off, that they may put on more life and vigor. God seems to be cold—that he may make us the more hot; he seems to be careless—that he may make us the more earnest; he seems to be backward—that he may make us the more forward in pressing upon him. The father delays the child—that he may make him the more eager; and so does God his children—that he may make them the more divinely violent.

When Balaam had once put off Balak, 'Then Balak sent other princes, more numerous and more distinguished than the first', Num. 22:15. Balaam's put-offs did but make Balak the more importunate, it did but increase and whet his desires. This is that which God aims at by all his put-offs—to make his children more earnest, to whet up their spirits, and that they may send up more and yet more honorable prayers after him, that they may cry more earnestly, strive more mightily, and wrestle more importunately with God, and that they may take heaven with a more sacred violence.

Anglers draw back the hook, that the fish may be the more forward to bite; and God sometimes seems to draw back—but it is only that we may press the more on. Therefore, as anglers, when they have long waited, and perceive that the fish does not so much as nibble at the bait, yet do they not impatiently throw away the rod, or break the hook and line—but pull up, and look upon the bait and mend it, and so throw it in again, and then the fish bites. So when a Christian prays, and prays, and yet catches nothing, God seems to be silent, and heaven seems to be shut against him; yet let him not cast off prayer—but mends his prayer; pray more believingly, pray more affectionately, and pray more fervently—and then the fish will bite—then mercy will come, and comfort will come, and deliverance will come! But,

[4.] Fourthly, **God delays and puts off his people many times, that he may make a fuller discovery of themselves to themselves.** Few Christians see themselves and understand themselves rightfully. By delays God discovers much of a man's sinful self to his pious self; much of his worser part to his better part; of his ignoble part to his most noble part. When the fire is put under the pot—then the scum appears; so when God delays a poor soul, Oh! how does the scum of pride, the scum of murmuring, the scum of quarreling, the scum of distrust, the scum of impatience, the scum of despair—discover itself in the heart of a poor creature? Ezek. 24:6.

I have read of a fool, who being left in a chamber, and the door locked when he was asleep; after he awakes, and finds the door locked and all the people gone, he cries out at the window, O myself, myself, O myself! So when God shuts the door upon his people, when he delays them, and puts them off, Ah! what cause have they to cry out of themselves, to cry out of proud self, and worldly self, and carnal self, and foolish self, and willful self, etc. We are very apt, says Seneca, to use eye-glasses to behold other men's faults, rather than looking-glasses to behold our own; but now God's delays are as a looking-glass, in which God gives his people to see their own faults, Psalm 73:11, 12. Oh! that looseness, that vileness, that wretchedness, that sink of filthiness, that gulf of wickedness, that God by delays discovers to be in the hearts of men! But,

[5.] Fifthly, **God delays and puts off his people to enhance, to raise the price of mercy, the price of deliverance.** We usually set the highest price, the greatest esteem upon such things that we obtain with greatest difficulty. What we dearly buy—that we highly prize, Acts 21:8, Cant. 3:1. The more sighs, tears, weepings, wailings, watchings, strivings, and earnest longings, this mercy and that deliverance, and the other favor costs us—the more highly we shall value them. When a *delayed mercy* comes, it tastes more like a mercy, it sticks more like a mercy, it warms more like a mercy, works more like a mercy, and it endears the heart to God more like a mercy—than any other mercy which a man enjoys.

'This is the child,' said Hannah—after God had long delayed her—'for which I prayed, and the Lord has given me my petition which I asked of him.' 1 Sam. 1:27. Delayed mercy is *the cream of mercy*; no mercy so sweet, so dear, so precious to a man—as that which a man has gained after many put-offs. Mr. Glover, the martyr, sought the Lord earnestly and frequently for some special mercies, and the Lord delayed him long; but when he was even at the stake, then the Lord gave the mercies to him; and then, as a man overjoyed, he cries out to his friend, 'He has come! He has come!' But,

[6] Sixthly, **The Lord delays his people, that he may pay them back in his own coin.** God sometimes thinks best to **retaliate**, Prov. 1:23, 33. The spouse puts off Christ—Cant. 5:3, 'I have put off my coat, how can I put it on?' etc.; and Christ puts her off; verses 5-8. You have put off God from day to day, from month to month, yes, from year to year; and therefore, if God puts you off from day to day, or from year to year—have you any cause to complain? Surely not! You have often and long put off the motions of his Spirit, the directions of his word, the offers of his grace, the entreaties of his Son; and therefore what can be more just than that God should delay you for a time, and put you off for a season—who has delayed him, and put off him days without number? If God serves you as you have often served him—you have no reason to complain. But,

[7.] Seventhly, and lastly, **The Lord delays his people, that heaven may be the more sweet to them at last.** Here on earth, they meet with many delays and with many put-offs; but in heaven they shall never meet with one put-off, with one delay. Here many times they call and cry—and can get no answer; here they knock and pound—and yet the door of grace and mercy opens not to them; but in heaven they shall have mercy at the first word, at the first knock! There, whatever heart can wish—shall without delay be given. Here God seems to say sometimes—Souls! you have mistaken the door; or it is not the right time; or others must be served before you; or come some other time, etc. But in heaven God always answers immediately; and all the sweetness and blessedness and happiness of that state presents itself every hour to the soul. There God has never, God will never—say to any of his saints in heaven, 'Come tomorrow.' Such language the saints sometimes hear here—but such language is no way suitable to a glorified condition.

Therefore, seeing that the Lord never delays his people—but for great and weighty reasons, let his people be silent before him, let them not mutter nor murmur—but be mute. And so I am done with the objections.

I shall come now in the last place, to propound **some HELPS and DIRECTIONS which may contribute to the silencing and stilling of your souls under the greatest afflictions, the sharpest trials, and the saddest providences that you meet with** in this world; and so close up this discourse.

(1.) First, **All the afflictions which come upon the saints, are the fruits of divine love.** Rev. 3:19, 'As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten—be zealous therefore, and repent.' Heb. 12:6, 'For whom the Lord loves, he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives.' Job 5:17, 'Behold! happy is the man whom God corrects; therefore despise not the chastening of the Almighty.' chapter 7:17, 18, 'What is man that you make so much of him, that you give him so much attention, that you examine him every morning and test him every moment?' Isaiah 48:10 'I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.'

When Munster lay sick, and his friends asked him how he did, and how he felt himself, he pointed to his sores and ulcers, whereof he was full, and said, 'These are God's gems and jewels with which he decks his best friends, and to me they are more precious than all the gold and silver in the world!

A gentleman highly prizes his hawk, he feeds her with his own hand, he carries her upon his arm, he takes a great deal of delight and pleasure in her; and therefore he puts a chain upon her leg, and a hood upon her head; he hoodwinks her, and fetters her, because he loves her, and takes delight in her. So the Lord by afflictions hoodwinks and fetters his children—but all is because he loves them, and takes delight and pleasure in them.

There cannot be a greater evidence of God's hatred and wrath—than his refusing to correct men for their sinful courses and vanities1 'Why should you be smitten any more? you will revolt more and more,' Isaiah 1:5. Where God refuses to correct—there God resolves to destroy! There is no man so near God's axe, so near the flames, so near hell—as he whom God will not so much as spend a rod upon! **God is most angry—when He shows no anger!**

Jerome, writing to a sick friend, has this expression, 'I account it a part of unhappiness not to know adversity.' 'Nothing,' says Demetrius, 'seems more unhappy to me, than he to whom no adversity has happened. God afflicts you, O Christian, in love; and therefore Luther cries out, 'Strike, Lord; strike, Lord, and spare not!' Who can seriously meditate upon this, and not be silent under God's most smarting rod?

(2.) Secondly, **Consider Christian, that all the trials and troubles, the calamities and miseries, the crosses and losses,**

which you meet with in this world—is all the hell that you shall ever have! Here and now you have your hell. Hereafter you shall have your heaven! This is the worst of your condition; the best is yet to come! Lazarus had his hell first, his heaven last; but Dives had his heaven first, and his hell at last. You have all your pangs, and pains, and throes here—that ever you shall have! Your ease, and rest, and pleasure—is yet to come. Here you have all your bitters; your sweets are yet to come! Here you have your sorrows; your joys are yet to come! Here you have all your winter nights; your summer days are yet to come! Here you have your evil things; your good things are yet to come! Death will put an end to all your sins—and to all your sufferings! Death will be an inlet to those joys, delights, and comforts—which shall never have an end! Who can seriously meditate upon this, and not be silent under God's most smarting rod?

(3.) Thirdly, **Get an assurance that Christ is yours, and pardon of sin yours, and divine favor yours, and heaven yours.** The sense of this will exceedingly quiet and silence the soul under the sorest and sharpest trials a Christian can meet with in this world. He who is assured that God is his portion, will never mutter nor murmur under his greatest burden! He who can groundedly say, 'Nothing shall separate me from the love of God in Christ!' will be able to triumph in the midst of the greatest tribulations, Rom. 8:33-39. He who with the spouse can say, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his!' Cant. 2:16 will bear up quietly and sweetly under the heaviest afflictions!

In the time of the Marian persecution there was a gracious woman, who being convened before bloody Bonner, then bishop of London, upon the trial of her religion, he threatened her that he would take away her husband from her. Says she, 'Christ is my husband!' I will take away your child. 'Christ,' says she, 'is better to me than ten sons!' I will strip you, says he, of all your outward comforts. 'Yes—but Christ is mine,' says she, 'and you cannot strip me of him.' Oh! the assurance that Christ was hers bore up her heart, and quieted her spirit under all.

'You may take away my life,' says Basil—'but you cannot take away my comfort. You may take away my head—but not my crown.' 'Yes,' says he—'had I a thousand lives, I would lay them all down for my Savior's sake, who has done abundantly more for me!'

John Ardley when he told he was going to be burned at the stake for Christ, said that if he had as many lives as he had hairs on his head, he would lose them all in the fire before he would lose his Christ!

Assurance will keep a man from muttering and murmuring under the sorest afflictions. Mr, Rogers, the first martyr who was burnt in Queen Mary's days, did sing in the flame! A soul who lives in the assurance of divine favor, and in its title to glory, cannot but bear up patiently and quietly under the greatest sufferings which possibly can befall it in this world. That scripture is worth its weight in gold, 'The inhabitants of Zion shall not say, I am sick. The people who dwell there, shall be forgiven their iniquity,' Isaiah 33:24. He does not say, they were not sick. No! But though they were sick, yet they would not say that they were sick. But why should they forget their sorrows, and not remember their pains, nor be sensible of their sickness? Why! the reason is—because the Lord had forgiven them their iniquities! The sense of pardon took away the sense of pain; the sense of forgiveness took away the sense of sickness.

Assurance of pardon will take away the pain, the sting, the trouble of every trouble and affliction that a Christian meets with! No affliction will daunt, startle, or stagger an assured Christian. An assured Christian will be patient and silent under all, Psalm 23.

Melanchthon makes mention of a godly woman, who, having upon her deathbed been in much conflict, and afterward much comforted, broke out into these words—Now, and not until now, I understand the meaning of these words, 'Your sins are forgiven!' the sense of which did mightily cheer and quiet her. He who has got *this jewel of assurance* in his bosom, will be far enough off from vexing or fretting under the saddest dispensations that he meets with in this world.

(4.) Fourthly, **If you would be quiet a**

(4.) Fourthly, **If you would be quiet and silent under your present troubles and trials, then dwell much upon the benefit, the profit, the advantage that has redounded to your souls by all your FORMER troubles and afflictions.** Ecc 7:14, 'In the day of adversity *consider*.' Oh! now consider, how by former afflictions the Lord has discovered sin, prevented sin, and mortified sin! Consider how the Lord by former afflictions has discovered to you the impotency, the mutability, the insufficiency, and the vanity of the world, and all worldly concerns! Consider how the Lord by former afflictions has melted your heart, and broken your heart, and humbled your heart, and prepared your heart for clearer, fuller, and sweeter enjoyments of himself! Consider what pity, what compassion, what affections, what tenderness, and what sweetness former afflictions have wrought in you, towards others in misery! Consider what room former afflictions have made in your soul for God, for his word, for good counsel, and for divine comfort! Consider how by former afflictions the Lord has made you more partaker of his Christ, his Spirit, his holiness, his goodness, etc. Consider how by former afflictions the Lord has made you to look towards heaven more, to mind heaven more, to prize heaven more, and to long for heaven more, etc.

Now, who can seriously consider of all that good that he has gotten by former afflictions—and not be silent under present afflictions? Who can remember those choice, those great, and those precious earnings that his soul has made of former afflictions, and not reason himself into a holy silence under present afflictions thus, "O my soul! has not God done you much good, great good, special good—by former afflictions? Yes! O my soul! has not God done that for you by former afflictions—which you would not undo for ten thousand worlds? Yes! And is not God, O my soul! as powerful as ever, as faithful as ever, as gracious as ever, and as ready and willing as ever—to do you good by present afflictions, as he has been to do you good by former afflictions? Yes! Yes! Why, why then do you not sit silent and mute before him, under your present troubles, O my soul?"

It was the saying of one, that *an excellent memory* was needful for three sorts of men—First, for tradesmen; for they, having many businesses to do, many reckonings to make up, many irons in the fire, had need of a good memory. Secondly, great talkers; for they, being full of words, had need to have a good storehouse in their heads to feed their tongues. Thirdly, for liars; for they telling many untruths, had need of a good memory, lest they should be discovered in their lying contradictions. And I may add for a fourth, that is—those that are afflicted, that they may remember the great good which they have gained by former afflictions, that so they may be the more silent and quiet under present troubles!

(5.) Fifthly, To **quiet and silence your souls under the sorest afflictions and sharpest trials, consider, that your choicest, your chief treasure is safe!** Your God is safe, your Christ is safe, your portion is safe, your crown is safe, your inheritance is safe, your royal palace is safe, and your jewels—your graces—are safe! Therefore remain silent before the Lord! 2Ti 1:12; 2Ti 4:8.

I have read a story of a man that had a suit, and when his cause was to be heard, he applied himself to *three friends*, to see what they could do for him—one answered, he would bring him as far on his journey as he could; the second promised him that he would go with him to his journey's end; the third engaged himself to go with him before the judge, and to speak for him, and not to leave him until his cause was heard and determined. These three are a man's **riches**, his **friends**, and his **graces**. His RICHES will help him to comfortable accommodations while they stay with him—but they often take leave of a man before his soul takes leave of his body. His FRIENDS will go with him to his grave, and then leave him. But his GRACES will accompany him before God, they will not leave him nor forsake him; they will go to the grave, to glory, with him! 1Ti 6:18-19.

In that famous battle at Leuctrum, the Thebans got a great victory. But their captain, Epaminondas, a little before his death, asked whether his shield was taken by the enemy. When he was assured that it was safe—he died most willingly, cheerfully, and quietly. Well! Christians, your *shield of faith* is safe, your portion is safe, your royal robe is safe, your kingdom is safe, your heaven is safe, your happiness and blessedness is safe! Therefore, under all your afflictions and troubles—be mute under the smarting rod. But,

(6.) Sixthly, **If you would be silent and quiet under your sorest troubles and trials, then set yourselves in good earnest upon the mortification of your lusts.** It is unmortified lust, which is the sting of every trouble, and which makes every sweet bitter, and every bitter more bitter. Sin unmortified adds weight to every burden, it puts gall to our wormwood, it adds chain to chain—it makes the bed uneasy, the home a prison, relaxations troublesome, and everything vexatious to the soul. Jas 4:1, 'From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts, which war in your members?' So I say—from whence comes all this muttering, murmuring, fretting, and vexing, etc. Don't they come from your unmortified lusts? Don't they come from your unmortified pride, and unmortified self-love, and unmortified unbelief, and unmortified passion, etc.? Surely they do! Oh, therefore, as ever you would be silent under the afflicting hand of God, labor for more and more of the *grace of the Spirit*—by which you may mortify the lusts of the flesh! Rom 8:13.

It is not your strongest resolutions or purposes, without the grace of the Spirit, which can overmaster a lust. A *soul-sore* will continue to run—though we resolve and say it shall not. It was the *blood* of the sacrifice, and the *oil*, which cleansed the leper in the law. And by them is meant the *blood of Christ* and the *grace of his Spirit*. Lev 14:14-16. It was *a touch of Christ's garment* which cured the woman of her bloody issue, Mar 5:25.

Your strongest resolutions or purposes may hide a sin—but cannot quench it. They may cover a sin—but cannot cut off a sin. A black patch may cover some sores—but it cures them not! Neither is it the papists' purgatories, watchings, whippings, etc., nor the kissing of the statue of St. Francis, or licking of lepers' sores—which will cleanse the fretting leprosy of sin! **In the strength of Christ, and in the power of the Spirit—set soundly upon the mortifying of every lust!** Oh, hug none, indulge none—but resolvedly set upon the ruin of every lust!

One leak in a ship will sink it! One stab strikes Goliad just as dead—as twenty-three did Caesar! One Delilah may do Samson as much mischief as all the Philistines! One broken wheel spoils the whole clock! One vein bleeding will let out all the vitals! One fly will spoil a whole box of ointment! One bitter herb will spoil all the pottage! By eating one apple, Adam lost paradise! One lick of honey endangered Jonathan's life! One Achan was a trouble to all Israel! One Jonah raises a storm and becomes load too heavy for the whole ship! Just so—one unmortified lust will raise very strong storms and tempests in the soul, in the days of affliction.

And therefore, as you would have a blessed calm and quietness in your own spirits under your sharpest trials, set thoroughly upon the work of mortification. Gideon had seventy sons, and but one bastard child, yet that bastard child destroyed all his seventy sons! Jdg 8:30-31, Jdg 9:1-2. Ah, Christian! do you not know what a world of mischief one unmortified lust may do? And therefore let nothing satisfy you, but the blood of all your lusts!

(7.) Seventhly, If you would be silent under your greatest afflictions, your sharpest trials, then make this consideration your daily companion, that is, That **all the afflictions which come upon you—come upon you by and through that covenant of grace, which God has made with you.** In the covenant of grace, God has engaged himself to keep you from the evils, snares, and temptations of the world; in the covenant of grace, God has engaged himself to purge away your sins, to brighten and increase your graces, to crucify your hearts to the world, and to prepare you and preserve you to his heavenly kingdom; and by afflictions he effects all this, and that according to his covenant too.

"I will maintain my love to him forever, and my covenant with him will never fail. I will establish his line forever, his throne as long as the heavens endure. If his sons forsake my law and do not follow my statutes, if they violate my decrees and fail to keep my commands, I will punish their sin with the rod, their iniquity with flogging; but I will not take my love from him, nor will I ever betray my faithfulness. I will not violate my covenant or alter what my lips have uttered." Psa 89:28-34. In these words you have a supposition that the saints may both fall into sins of commission and sins of omission; in the following words you have God's gracious promise—'Then I will punish their sin with the rod, their iniquity with flogging.' God engages himself by promise and covenant—not only to chide and check—but also to correct his people for their sins—'but I will not take my love from him, nor will I ever betray my faithfulness. I will not violate my covenant or alter what my lips have uttered.'

Afflictions are fruits of God's faithfulness—to which the covenant binds him. God would be unfaithful, if he did not afflict his people. Afflictions are part of that gracious covenant which God has made with his people; afflictions are mercies, yes, covenant mercies! Psa 119:75. Hence it is that God is called the 'God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love,' Neh 1:5; because, by his covenant of mercy, he is bound to afflict and chastise his people. God by covenant is bound to preserve his people, and not to allow them to perish; and happy are those who are preserved, whether in salt and vinegar—or in wine and sugar.

All the afflictions which come upon a wicked man, come upon him by virtue of a covenant of works—and so all are cursed unto him. But all the afflictions which come upon a gracious man, they come upon him by virtue of a covenant of grace—and so they are blessed unto him. Therefore he has eminent cause to be silent, to lay his hand upon his mouth.

(8) Eighthly, If you would be silent and quiet under afflictions, then dwell much upon this—**That all your afflictions do but reach the worser, the baser, and the more ignoble part of a Christian, that is, his body**, his outward man. 'Though our outward man decays, yet our inward man is renewed day by day,' 2Co 4:16. As Aristarchus said, when he was beaten by the tyrants—'Beat on! It is not Aristarchus you beat, it is only his shell.' Timothy had a very healthful soul—in a sick body, 1Ti 5:23. Gaius had a very prosperous soul—in a weak distempered body, 3Jn 1:2.

Epictetus and many of the more refined heathens, have long since concluded that the *body* was but the shell—the *soul* was the man. Now, all the troubles and afflictions which a Christian meets with, they do not reach his soul, they touch not his conscience, they make no breach upon his noble part; and therefore he has cause to be silent, and to lay his hand upon his mouth. The soul is the breath of God, Heb 12:9, Zec 12:1, the beauty of man, the wonder of angels, and the envy of devils. The soul is a celestial plant, and of a divine offspring; it is an immortal spirit. Souls are of an angelic nature; a man is somewhat of an angel clothed in clay. The soul is a greater miracle in man, than all the miracles wrought among men. The soul is a demi-semi-god dwelling in a house of clay. Now it is not in the power of any outward troubles and afflictions which a Christian meets with, to reach his soul; and therefore he may well sit mute under the smarting rod.

(9.) Ninthly, If you would be silent and quiet under the saddest providences and sorest trials, then **keep up FAITH in continual exercise**. "We live by faith, not by sight." 2Co 5:7. Now faith, in the exercise of it, will quiet and silence the soul, thus,

[1.] By bringing the soul to sit down satisfied in the naked enjoyments of God, Joh 14:8, Psa 17:13.

[2.] By drying up the springs of pride, self-love, impatience, murmuring, unbelief, and the carnal delights of this world.

[3.] By presenting to the soul greater, sweeter, and better things in Christ, than anything this world can afford, Heb 11:3, Php 3:7-8.

[4.] By lessening the soul's esteem of all outward vanities. Do but keep up the exercise of faith, and you will keep silent before the Lord. No man so mute, as he whose faith is still busy about invisible objects.

(10.) Tenthly, If you would keep silent, then **keep HUMBLE before the Lord**. Oh! labor every day to be more humble and more low and little in your own eyes. 'Who am I,' says the humble soul—'but that God should cross me in this mercy, and take away that mercy, and pass a sentence of death upon every mercy? I am not worthy of the least mercy, I deserve not a crumb of mercy, I have forfeited every mercy, I have never improved a mercy.'

Only by pride comes contention. It is only pride that puts men upon contending with God and men. A humble soul will lie quiet at the foot of God, it will be contented with bare necessities, Pro 13:16. As you know that sheep can live upon the bare commons, which a fat ox cannot. A dinner of green herbs relishes well with the humble man's palate; whereas a stalled ox is but a coarse dish to a proud man's stomach. A humble heart thinks none less than himself, nor none worse than himself. **A humble heart looks upon small mercies as great mercies; and great afflictions as small afflictions; and small afflictions as no afflictions**; and therefore sits mute and quiet under all. Do but keep humble, and you will keep silent before the Lord. Pride kicks, and flings, and frets—but a humble man has still his hand upon his mouth. Everything on this side hell is mercy—much mercy, rich mercy to a humble soul; and therefore he remains mute under the smarting rod.

(11.) Eleventh, If you would keep silence under the afflicting hand of God, then keep close, and hold fast, these **soul-silencing and soul-quieting maxims or principles**. As,

[1.] First, That **the worst that God does to his people in this world, is only to make them a little heaven on earth**. He brings them into a wilderness—but it is, that he may speak comfortably to them, Hos 2:14. He casts them into the fiery furnace—but it is, that they may have more of his company. Do the stones come thick and heavy around Stephen's ears—it is but to knock him the nearer to Christ, the corner-stone, etc.

[2.] Secondly, If you would be silent, then hold fast this—**What God, our Father wills, is best.** "Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but **God disciplines us for our good**, that we may share in his holiness." Heb 12:10. When he wills sickness, sickness in better than health; when he wills weakness, weakness is better than strength; when he wills want, want is better than wealth; when he wills reproach, reproach is better than honor; when he wills death, death is better than life. As God is wisdom itself, and so knows that which is best; so he is goodness itself, and therefore cannot do anything but that which is best—therefore remain silent before the Lord.

[3.] Thirdly, If you would be silent under your greatest afflictions, then hold fast to this principle—That **the Lord will bear you company in all your afflictions**, Isa 41:10; Isa 43:1-3; Psa 23:1-6; Psa 90:15; Dan 3:25, Gen 39:20-21; 2Ti 4:16-17. These scriptures are *breasts full of divine consolation!* These wells of salvation are full; will you turn to them and draw out, that your souls may be satisfied and quieted?

[4.] Fourthly, If you would be silent under your afflictions, then hold fast this principle, That **the Lord has more high, more noble, and more blessed ends in the afflicting of you—than he has in the afflicting of the men of the world**. The stalk, and the ear of corn, both fall upon the threshing floor—one is cast away, the other is preserved. From one and the same olive tree, and from under one and the same press—is crushed both oil and dregs—but the one is stored for use, the other thrown out as unserviceable. Just so, though afflictions do befall good and bad alike, as the Scripture speaks, Ecc 9:2, yet the Lord will effect more glorious ends by those afflictions which befall his people, than he will effect by those that befall wicked men. Therefore the Lord puts his people into the furnace for their *trial*—but the wicked for their *ruin*. The one is bettered by affliction—the other is made worse. The one is made soft and tender by afflictions—the other is more hard and obdurate. The one is drawn nearer to God by afflictions—the other is driven further from God, etc.

[5.] Fifthly, If you would be silent under your afflictions, then you must hold fast this principle—That **the best way in this world to have your own will, is to lie down in the will of God, and quietly to resign up yourself to the good will and pleasure of God**. Mat 15:21, Mat 15:29. Luther was a man who could have anything from God, and why? Why! because he submitted his will to the will of God! He lost his will in the will of God. O soul! it shall be even as you will—if your will be swallowed up in the will of God.

[6.] Sixthly and lastly, If you would be silent under the afflicting hand of God, then you must hold fast to this principle—That **God will make times of afflictions to be times of special manifestations of divine love and favor to you**. Tiburtius saw a paradise when he walked upon hot burning coals. I could affirm this by a cloud of witnesses—but that I must close. Ah, Christians! as ever you would be quiet and silent under the smarting rod, hold fast to these principles, and keep them as your lives! But,

(12) Twelfthly and lastly, To silence and quiet your soul under the afflicting hand of God, **dwell much upon the brevity or shortness of man's life**. **This present life is not life—but a motion, a journey towards life.** Man's life, says one, is the shadow of smoke, yes, the dream of a shadow! Says another, man's life is so short, that Augustine doubted whether to call it a *dying life* or a *living death*. You have but a *day* to live, and perhaps you may be now in the last hour of that day; therefore hold out faith and patience. Your troubles and your life, shall shortly end together; therefore remain silent before the Lord. Your grave is going to be made; your sun is near setting; death begins to call you off the stage of this world. Death stands at your back; you must shortly sail forth upon the ocean of eternity; though you have a great deal of work to do—a God to honor, a Christ to close with, a soul to save, a race to run, a crown to win, a hell to escape, a pardon to beg, a heaven to make sure; yet you have but a little time to do it in!

You have one foot in the grave—you are even going ashore on eternity—and will you now cry out of your affliction? Will you now mutter and murmur when you are entering upon an unchangeable and eternal condition? What extreme folly and madness is it for a man to mutter and murmur when he is just a-going out of prison, and his bolts and chains are just a-knocking off! Why, Christian, this is just your case! Therefore remain silent before the Lord. Your life is but short—therefore your troubles cannot be long! Hold up and hold out quietly and patiently a little longer—and **heaven shall make amends for all!**

"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us!" Rom 8:18.