

## The Reign of Grace

### Part II

By [Thomas Brooks](#)

(1.) First, and that more generally, *That they shall work for their good* ver. 27, 'It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.' A gracious soul secretly concludes, as stars shine brightest in the night, so God will make my soul shine and glister like gold, whilst I am in this furnace, and when I come out of the furnace of affliction: Job xxiii. 10, 'He knoweth the way that I take; and when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.'

Surely, as the tasting of honey did open Jonathan's eyes, so this cross, this affliction, shall open mine 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 xxxiii. 27, 28; xl. 4, 5; xiii. 1-7.

Surely this affliction shall issue in the purging away of my dross, Isa. i. 25.

Surely as ploughing of the ground killeth the weeds, and harrowing breaketh hard clods, so these afflictions shall kill my sins, and soften my heart, Hosea v. 15, vi. 1-3.

Surely as the plaster draws out the core, so the afflictions that 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, Pa. cxix. 67, 71.

Surely by these the Lord will crucify my heart more and more to the world, and the world to my heart, Gal. vi. 14; Ps. cxxxi. 1-3.

Surely by these afflictions the Lord will hide pride from any soul, Job xxxiii. 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 ill humours, better than all the *benedicta medicamenta*, as physicians call them, Zech. xiii. 8, 9.

Surely these shall increase my spiritual experiences, Rom. v. 3, 4.

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

Surely by these God will communicate more of himself unto me, Hosea ii. 14.

Surely by these afflictions the Lord will draw out my heart more and more to seek him, Isa. xxvi. 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 councillors. Hosea v. 15, 'In their afflictions they will seek me early,' or as the Hebrew hath 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 another world, John xiv. 1-3; Rom. viii. 17, 18; 2 Cor. iv. 16-18.

Surely by these afflictions the Lord will work in me more tenderness and compassion towards those that are afflicted, Heb. X. 34, xiii 3. As that Tyrian queens said,

Evils have taught me to bemoan,  
All that afflictions make to groan.

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. Bishop Bonner was full of guts; but empty of bowels; I am afraid this age is full of such Bonners.

Surely these are but God's love-tokens: Rev. iii. 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 favourite, telling him, that it was not lawful for him to complain whilst Caesar was his friend. So saith the holy Christian, O my soul! be quiet, be still; all is in love, all is a fruit of divine favour. 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. iii. 28, 'He sitteth alone, and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him.'

Afflictions abase the loveliness of the world without, that might entice us; it 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, *They shall keep them humble and low:* Lam. iii. 29, 'He putteth 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 of the learned 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, *Aures habet in pedibus*, he hath 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 xiii. 1-7; Acts ix. 1-8.

(3.) Thirdly, The third soul-quieting conclusion you have in Lam. iii. 31, 'For the Lord will not cast off for ever;' the rod shall not always lie upon the back of the righteous. 'At even-tide, lo there is trouble, but afore morning it is gone,' Isa. xvii. 13. As Athanasius said to his friends, when they came to bewail his misery and banishment, *Nubecula est, cito transibit*; it is but a little cloud, said he, and it will quickly be gone. There are none of God's afflicted ones, that have not their *lucida intervalle*, their intermissions, respites, breathing-whiles; yea, so small a while doth 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. xxvi. 20, 'Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment (or for a little space, a little while), until the indignation be overpass.' The indignation doth not *transire*, but *pertransire*, pass, but over-pass. The sharpness, shortness, and suddenness of the saints' afflictions, is set forth by the travail of a woman, John xvi. 21, which is sharp, short, and sudden.

(4.) Fourthly, The fourth soul-silencing conclusion you have in Lamentations iii. 32 'But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion, according to the multitude of his mercies.' 'In wrath God remembers mercy,' Hab. iii. 2. 'Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning,' Ps. xxx. 5. Their morning shall last but till 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 honour, 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 south wind of mercy, and the 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 drying, nipping north wind of calamity, as well as under the warm, cherishing south wind of mercy and prosperity.

(5) Fifthly, The fifth soul-quieting conclusion you have in Lament. iii. 33, 'For he doth not afflict willingly (or as the Hebrew hath it, 'from his heart'), 'nor grieve the children of men.' The church concludes that God's heart was not in their afflictions, though his hand was. He takes no delight to afflict his children; it goes against the hair and the heart; it is a grief to him to be grievous to them, a pain to him to be punishing of them, a death to him to be striking of them; he hath no will, no motion, no inclination, no disposition, to that work of afflicting of his people; and therefore he calls it his 'work, his strange work,' Isa. xxviii. 21. Mercy and punishment, they flow from God, as the honey and the sting from the bee. The bee yieldeth honey of her own nature, but she doth not sting but when she is provoked. He takes delight in shewing of mercy, Micah vii. 18; he takes no pleasure in giving his people up to adversity, Hosea xi. 8. Mercy and kindness floweth 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 bowels, at those very times may be yearning towards his people, Jer. xxxi. 18-20. No man can tell how the heart of God stands by his hand; his 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 hath set his heart, as you may see in Job and Lazarus. And thus you see those gracious, blessed, soul-quieting conclusions about the issue and event of afflictions, that a holy, a prudent silence doth include.

*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*. Ps. xxxvii. 7, 'Rest in the Lord, (or as the Hebrew hath it, 'be silent to the Lord'), 'and wait patiently for him.' I charge thee, O my soul, not to mutter, nor to murmur; I command thee, 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. viii. 26, 'Be still; and there was a great calm,'—so conscience lays a charge upon the soul to be quiet and still: Ps. xxvii. 14, 'Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy 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 be in the soul, by such like reasonings as the clerk of Ephesus stilled that uproar: Acts xix. 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 thou wilt one day be called in question for all those inward mutterings, uproars, and passions that are in thee, 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, whilst 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 thou pleasest, write upon me as thou pleasest: I give up myself to be at thy dispose.'

There was a good woman, who, when she was sick, being asked whether she were willing to live or die, answered, 'Which God pleaseth.' But, said one that stood by, 'If God should refer it to you, which should you choose?' 'Truly,' said she, 'if God should refer it to me, I would even refer it to him again.' This was a soul worth gold. Well! saith a gracious soul, the ambitious man giveth himself up to his honours, but I give up myself unto thee; the voluptuous man gives himself up to his pleasures, but I give up myself to thee; the covetous man gives himself up to his bags, but I give up myself to thee; the wanton gives himself up to his minion, but I give up myself to thee; the drunkard gives himself up to his cups, but I give up myself to thee; the papist gives up himself to his idols, but I give myself to thee; the Turk gives up himself to his Mahomet, but I give up myself to thee; the heretic gives up himself to his heretical opinions, but I give up myself to thee. Lord! lay what burden thou wilt upon me, only let thy everlasting arms be under me [Luther]. Strike, Lord, strike, and spare not, for I am lain down in thy will, I have learned to say amen to thy amen; thou hast a greater interest in me than I have in myself, and therefore I give up myself unto thee, and am willing to be at thy dispose, and am ready to receive what impression thou shalt stamp upon me. O blessed Lord! hast thou not again and again said unto me, as once the king of Israel said to the king of Syria, 'I am thine, and all that I have,' 1 Kings xx. 4. I am thine, O soul! to save thee; my mercy is thine to pardon thee; my blood is thine to cleanse thee; my merits are thine to justify thee; my righteousness is thine to clothe thee; my Spirit is thine to lead thee; my grace is thine to enrich thee; and my glory is thine to reward thee; and therefore, saith a gracious soul, I cannot but make a resignation of myself unto thee. 'Lord! here I am, do with me as seemeth good in thine own eyes.' I know the best way to have my own will, is to resign up myself to thy will, and to say amen to thy 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, saith the shepherd, what weather pleaseth me; and being courteously requested to express his meaning, Sir, saith he, it shall be what weather pleaseth God, and what weather pleaseth God pleaseth me. When a Christian's will is moulded 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: Ps. xli. 1-3; Ps. lxxii. 5, 'My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him;' Lam. iii. 26, 'It is good that a man should both hope, and quietly (or as the Hebrew hath it, silently) wait for the salvation of the Lord.'* The husbandman patiently waiteth for the precious fruits of the earth, the mariner patiently waiteth for wind and tide, and so doth the watchman for the dawning of the day; and so doth the silent soul in the night of adversity, patiently wait for the dawning of the day of mercy, James v. 7,

8. The mercies of God are not styled the swift, but the sure mercies of David, and therefore a gracious soul waits patiently for them. And thus you see what a gracious, a prudent silence doth include.

III. The third thing is, to discover *what a holy, a prudent silence under affliction doth not exclude*. Now there are eight things that a holy patience doth not exclude.

1. First, A holy, a prudent silence under affliction doth not exclude and shut out a *sense and feeling of our afflictions*, Ps. xxxix. 9, though he 'was dumb, and laid his hand upon his mouth,' yet he was very sensible of his affliction: verses 10, 11, 'Remove thy stroke away from me, I am consumed by the blow of thine hand. When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity.' He is sensible of his pain as well as of his sin; and having prayed off his sin in the former verses he labours here to pray off his pain. Diseases, aches, sicknesses, pains, they are all the daughters of sin, and he that is not sensible of them as the births and products of sin, doth but add to his sin and provoke the Lord to add to his sufferings, Isa. xxvi. 9-11. No man shall ever be charged by God for feeling his burden, if he neither fret nor faint under it. Grace doth not destroy nature, but rather perfect it. Grace is of a noble offspring; it neither turneth 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 religious 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. Isa. xlii. 24, 25, 'Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law. Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle: and he hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.' Stupidity lays a man open to the greatest fury and severity.

The physician, when he findeth that the potion which he hath given his patient will not work, he seconds it with one more violent; and if that will not work, he gives another yet more violent. 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 cauterising 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 hath made their lives a hell. Afflictions are the saints' diet-drink; and where do you read in all the Scripture

that ever any of the saints drunk of this diet-drink, and were not sensible of it.

2. Secondly, A holy, a prudent, silence doth 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: ver. 10 'Remove thy stroke away from me;' and ver. 11,12, 'Hear my prayer, O Lord! and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears; for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were. Oh spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence and be no more;' James v. 13, 'Is any among you afflicted? let him pray;' Ps. l. 15 'Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.' 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 thy rest O my soul.' Jonah prays in the whale's belly, and Daniel prays when among the lions, and Job prays when on the dunghill, and Jeremiah prays when in the dungeon, &c; yea, the heathen mariners, as stout as they were, when in a storm, they cry every man to his god, Jonah i. 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 an heathen, as Aeschylus observeth, saith thus: 'When the Grecian forces hotly pursued our host, 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 mine eyes I saw, saith he, 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 till they got over.' And shall blind 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, viz. hot and cold, so there are two kinds of antidotes against all the troubles and afflictions of this life, viz. 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 ! saith he, it is more bitter than death to be spoiled 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 doth not exclude prayer; but,

3. Thirdly, A holy, a prudent silence doth not exclude *men's being kindly affected and afflicted with their sins as the meritorious cause of all their sorrows and sufferings*, Lam. iii. 39, 40, 'Wherefore doth 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 xl. 4, 6, 'Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, thrice, but I proceed no further;' Micah vii. 9, 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned.' In all our sorrows we should read our sins; and 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 shew 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 *deliciae generis humani*, 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, saith David, but what have these poor sheep done?' 2 Sam. xxiv. 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 that this cup is so bitter, this pain so grievous, this loss so great, this disease so desperate, this wound so incurable; it is mine own self, mine own sin, that hath caused these floods of sorrows to break in upon me. But,

4. Fourthly, A holy, a prudent silence doth 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 bonds, viz., 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, Philip. i. 7, 13, 14. As the words of dying persons do many times stick and work gloriously, so many times do the words of afflicted persons 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 1 Cor. ii. 9, ' Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.' This word was like apples of gold in pictures of silver, Prov. xxv. 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 confesseth. Doubtless, many have been made happy by the words of the afflicted. The tongue of the afflicted hath 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: Eccles. x. 12, 'The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious,' or grace, as the Hebrew hath it; and so Jerome reads it, *Verba oris sapientis gratia*, the words of the mouth of a wise man are grace. They minister grace to others, and they win grace and favour 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 acid 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 speaketh of wisdom, and his tongue talketh judgement, for the law of the Lord is in his heart, Ps. xxxvii. 30;



now his lips drop as honey-combs, Cant. iv. 11; now his tongue is a tree of life, whose leaves are medicinable, Prov. xii. 18. As the silver trumpets sounded angst 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. x. 10.

The heathen man could say, *Quando sapient loquitur, aulea animi aperit*, when a wise man speaketh, he openeth 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 doth not exclude *moderate mourning or weeping under the afflicting hand of God*. Isa. xxxviii. 3, 'And Hezekiah wept sore', or, as the Hebrew hath it, 'wept with great weeping.' But was not the Lord displeased with him for his great weeping,? 'No; ver. 5, 'I have heard thy prayers, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years.' God had as well a bottle for his tears, as a bag for his sins, Ps. lvi. 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. And therefore the weeping prophet calleth out for tears: Lam. ii 18, 'Their heart crieth unto the Lord, O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night: give thyself no rest; let not the apple of thine eye cease;' or, as the Hebrew has it, Let not the daughters of thine eye be silent.' That which we call the ball 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, saith Bellarmine, *Clames assidue ad Deum, non lingua, sed oculis, non verbis sed lachrymis, ista enim est oratio, quae pacere solet: cry aloud, not with thy tongue, but with thine eyes; not with thy words, but with thy tears; for that is the prayer that maketh 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 hath 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, Ps. lv. 2, xxxviii. 6, Job xxx. 26-32. Good men sleep easily, saith the Greek poet; and the better any are, 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, Jonathan, Job, Ezra, Daniel, &c. How, saith 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, Eccles. iii. 4. The mourning garment among the Jews was the black garment, and the black garment was the mourning garment: Ps. xliii. 2, 'Why go ye mourning?' The Hebrew word *kedar* signifies black. Why go ye

in black? Sometimes Christians must put off their gay ornaments, and put on their black, their mourning garments, Exod. xxxiii. 3-6. But,

6. Sixthly, A gracious, a prudent silence doth 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, that is opposite to a holy silence: Exod. ii. 23, 'And the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage.' Job iii. 24, 'For my sighing cometh before I eat,' (or, as the Hebrew has it) 'before my meat;' his sighing, like bad weather, came unsent for and unsought: so Ps. xxxviii. 9, 'Lord, all my desire is before thee; and no groaning is not hid from thee.' Ps. cii. 5, 'By reason of the voice of my groaning, my bones cleave to my skin.' Job iii. 24, 'And my roarings are poured out like the waters.' Ps. xxxviii. 8, 'I am feeble and sore broken; I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.' Ps. xxii. 1, 'My, God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, from the words of my roaring?' Ps. xxxii. 3, 'When I kept silence, my bones waxed old, through my roarings all the day long.' He roars, but doth not rage; he roars, but doth 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! therefore do 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 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 sort tell that which his tongue can in no sort utter. But,

7. Seventhly, A holy, a prudent silence, doth not exclude nor shut out *the use of any just or lawful means, whereby persons 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. x. 23, 'But when they persecute you in this city, flee you into another,' Acts xii. 5, 'When Peter was in prison, the saints thronged together to pray, as the original has it, ver. 12; 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, ver. 6, that God could have no rest, till, by many miracles of power and mercy, he had returned Peter as a bosom-favour to them: Acts ix. 28-25, 'And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: but their laying await was known of Saul: and they watched the gates day and night to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.' 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 and butts for their enemies to shoot at: 2 Thess. iii. 1, 2, the apostles desire the brethren 'to pray for them, that they may be delivered from unreasonable (*atopoi*, absurd) and wicked (*poneroi*, villainous) men; for all men have not faith. It is a mercy worth a seeking, to be delivered out of the hands of absurd, villainous, and troublesome men.

Afflictions are evil in themselves, and we may desire and endeavour to be delivered from them, James v. 14, 15, Isa. xxxviii. 18-21; both inward and outward means are to be used for our own preservation. Had not Noah built an ark, he had been swept away with the flood, though he had been with Nimrod and his crew on the tower of Babel, which was raised to the height of one thousand five hundred forty-six paces as Heylin reported. 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 hath 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 a-questioning of him, what he made there, and how he came in? 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, doth not exclude *a just and sober complaining against the authors, contrivers, abettors, or instruments of our afflictions*: 2 Tim. iv. 14, 'Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil; the Lord reward him according to his works.' This Alexander is conceived by some to be that Alexander that is mentioned, Acts xix. 33, who stood so close to Paul at Ephesus, that he run the hazard of losing his life by appearing on his side; yet if glorious professors come to be furious persecutors, Christians may complain: 2 Cor. xi. 24, 'Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes, save one.' They inflict, saith 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 off the utmost extremity of the Jewish law, when as they that were weak had their punishment mitigated: ver. 25a, 'Thrice was I beaten with rods,' that is, by the Romans, whose custom it was to beat the guilty with rods.

If Pharaoh make Israel groan, Israel make snake his complaint against Pharaoh to the Keeper of Israel, Exod. ii.; 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. xxxvii. 14-21.

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 sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him. Gen. xlix. 23, 24. And so David sadly complained of Doeg, Ps. cix. L. 21; yea, Christ himself, who was the most perfect pattern for dumbness and silence under sorest trials, complains against Judas, Pilate, and the rest of his persecutors, Ps. lxxix. 20, 30, &c.; yea, 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, scullions to scour off their rust, 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, Ps. cxxxii. 2-18. This truth I might make good by above a hundred texts of Scripture; but it is time to come to the reasons of the point.

*IV. Why must Christians be mute and silent under the greatest afflictions, the saddest providences, and sharpest trials that 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 the rod has a voice. Afflictions are the rod of God's anger, the rod of his displeasure, and his rod of revenge; he 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 bear the rod, and kiss the rod, and sit mute and silent under the rod: Micah vi. 9, 'The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.' God's rods are not mutes, they are all vocal, they are all speaking as well as smiting; every twig hath a voice. Ah! soul, saith one twig, thou sayest it smarts; well! tell me, is it good provoking of a jealous God? Jer. iv. 18. Ah! soul, saith another twig, thou sayest it is bitter, it reacheth to thy heart, but hath not thine own doings procured these things? Rom. vi. 20, 21. Ah! soul, saith another twig, where is the profit, the pleasure, the sweet that you have found in wandering from God? Hosea ii. 7. Ah! soul, saith 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 vi. 8. Ah! Christian, saith another twig, wilt thou search thy heart, and try thy ways, and turn to the Lord thy God? Lam. iii. 40. Ah! soul, saith another twig, wilt thou die to sin more than ever, and to the world more than ever, and to relations more than ever, and to thyself more than ever? Rom. xiv. 6-8; Gal. vi. 18. Ah! soul, saith another twig, wilt thou live more to Christ than ever, and cleave closer to Christ than ever, and prize thyself more than ever, and venture further for Christ than ever? Ah! soul, saith another twig, wilt thou 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, &c.? 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 hath a voice that is in the hands of earthly fathers, but children hear it not, they understand it not, till 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, till 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:* Isa. viii. 21, 22, 'And they shall pass through it hardly bestead and hungry: and it shall come to pass, that, when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king, and their God, and look upward. And they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness.' 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 succour, no support, no deliverance, like Bedlams, yea, like incarnate devils, they fall upon cursing of God, and their king: Isa lix. 11, 'We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far from us.' 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 persons 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. iv. 13; Isa. li. 20, 'Thy 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 thy God.' When the huntsman hath taken the wild bull in his toil, 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 nicked men, when they are taken in the net of affliction.

It is said of Marcellus the Roman general, that he could not be quiet, *nec victor, nec victus*, 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: Jer. li. 37, 38, 'And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling-place for dragons, an astonishment, and an hissing, without an inhabitant. They shall roar together like lions: and they shall yell as lions' whelps.' When the lion roars, all the beasts of the field tremble, Amos iii. 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: Rev. xvi. 9-12, 'They gnaw their tongues for pain, and they blaspheme the God of heaven, because of those sores, pains, and plagues

that are poured upon them; and they repented not of their deeds, to give him glory.' 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. lvii. 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 hath his flux and reflex; so it is much more restless, when by tempest upon tempest it is made to roar and rage, to foam and cant up mire and dirt. The raging sea is a fit emblem of a wicked man that 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:* Isa liii. 7, 'He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.' Christ was tongue-tied under all his sorrows and sufferings: 1 Peter ii. 21-23, 'Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.' Christ upon the cross did not only read us a lecture of patience and silence, but he hath also set us *hupogrammon*, 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 hath set before us. It is said of Antiochus, that being to fight with Judas, captain of the host of the Jews, he shewed unto his elephants the blood of the grapes and mulberries, to provoke them the better to fight. So the Holy Ghost hath set before us the injuries and contumelies, 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 hath been afflicted, oppressed, distressed, despised, persecuted, &c.; and we have read how dumb, how tongue-tied, how patient, and how silent he hath 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, *Singularis domini preclarus imitator*, an excellent disciple of a singular master. The heathens had this notion amongst them, as Lactantius reports, that the way to

honour their gods was to be like them; and therefore some would be wicked, counting it a dishonour to their gods to be unlike to them. I am sure the way to honour 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, then it is to be afflicted.* This is both the devil's sin, and the devil's punishment. God is still afflicting, crossing and vexing of him and he is still a-fretting, repining, vexing, and rising up against God. No sin to the devil's sin, no punishment to 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 thou seest a soul fretting, vexing, and stamping under the mighty hand of God, thou seest 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 hath been in chains almost this six thousand years, yet he hath 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 hath got, but is restless in his designs to fill hell with souls, 1 Pet. v. 8. He never wants an apple for an Eve, nor a grape for a Noah, nor a change of raiment for a Gehazi, nor a wedge of gold for an Achan, nor a crown for an Absalom, nor a bag 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 last 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 to the life whose whole life is filled up with vexing and fretting against the Lord. Let not any think, saith Luther, that the devil is now dead, nor yet asleep, for as he that keepeth Israel, so he that hateth Israel, neither slumbereth nor sleepeth. 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, doth 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. xii. 11, 'Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby;' James iii. 18, 'And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace, of them that make peace.' The still and quiet soul is like a ship that lies still and quiet in the harbour; you may take in what goods, what commodities you please, whilst 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, saith, God doth 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, &c.: Ps. lxxvii. 2, 'My soul refused to be comforted.' The impatient patient will take down no cordials; he hath 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 down; the sweetest music will make no melody in his ears: Exod. vi. 6-9, 'Wherefore, say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched-out arm, and with great judgment. And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God, and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the land concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, and I will give it to you for a heritage; I am the Lord.' 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 his 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 nothing will down. 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: ver. 9, 'And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel, but they hearkened not unto Moses, for anguish of spirit, and for 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 of impatience and discontent: and these humours being grown strong, nothing would take with them, nothing would agree with them. When persons are under strong pangs of passion, they have no ears neither for reason nor religion.

*Reason 6.* A sixth reason why gracious souls should be silent under the smarting rod, is this, viz, because *it is fruitless, it is bootless to strive, to contest or contend with God.* No man hath ever got anything, by muttering or murmuring under the



hand of God, except it hath been more frowns, blows, and wounds. Such as will not lie quiet and still, when mercy hath tied them with silken cords, justice will put them in iron chains; if golden fetters will not hold you, iron 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 till his stomach be brought down, and his spirit be made quiet before the Lord. What you get lay struggling and grumbling, you may put in your eye, and weep it out when you have done: Jer. vii. 19, 'Do they provoke me to anger, saith the Lord? Do they not provoke themselves to the confusion of their own faces? By provoking of me, they do but provoke themselves; by angering of me, they do but anger themselves; by vexing of me, they do but fret and vex themselves: 1 Cor. x. 22, 'Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

Zanchy observes these two things from these words:

1. That it is ill provoking God to wrath, because he is stronger than we.
2. That though God be stronger than we, yet there are those who 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 that hath laid it on your shoulders will bear the heaviest end of it himself; and why, then, should you mutter? Shall bears and lions take blows and knocks from their keepers, and wilt thou 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 lord, 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? Or 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 more they strengthen the distemper, and the longer it will be before the cure be ejected. The easiest and the surest way of cure is to lie still and quiet till the poison of the distemper be sweat out. Where patience hath its perfect work, there the cure will be certain and easy. When a man hath 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, his 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. He is the unwearied accuser of the brethren: Rev. xii. 10, 'The accuser of the brethren is cast down, which accuseth them before our God day and night.' Satan is the great make-bait between God and his children. He hath a mint constantly going in hell, where, as an untired mint-master, he is still a-coining 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 hath tempted them to that so he may disgrace them before God, and bring them, if it were possible, out of favour 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 endeavour 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 carriage becoming such a person, of whom 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 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 that mutters is foiled by him, but he that is mute 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. x. 3; so Eli, 1Sam. iii. 18; so David, 2 Sam. xvi. 7-13; so Job, chap. i. 21, 22; so E1iakim, Shebna, and Joab, Isa. xxxvi. 11, 12. So those saints in that Acts xxi. 12-15; and that cloud of witnesses pointed at in Heb. xii. 1. 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, that 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 a smarting rod. Certainly it is our greatest honour 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 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 dumbness 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 application.

V. You see, beloved, by what hath 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 persons. 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 amongst 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 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! hadst thou no more sins upon thee, thy murmuring were enough to undo thee, did not God exercise much pity and compassion towards thee. But more of this hereafter, and therefore let this touch for the present suffice.

2. *Secondly*, This truth looks sourly upon those that *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 viii. 21, 'When they were hardly bestead and hungry, they fret themselves, and curse their king and their God;' Prov. xix. 3, 'The foolishness of man perverteth his way, and his heart fretteth against the Lord.' The heart may be fretful and froward when the tongue doth 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 that hath brought him into sufferings, 2 Kings vi. 33, Ps. xxxvii. 1, 7, 8. A fretful soul dares let fly at God himself. When Pharaoh is troubled with the frets, he dare spit in the very face of God himself: 'Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?' Exod. v. 2. And when Jonah is in a fretting humour, he dares tell God to his face, 'that he doth well to be angry,' Jonah iv. 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 hath done with him, who fumes and frets, because he cannot snap in sunder the cords with which he is bound, Ezek. xvi. 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 hath ever got anything by his fretting and flinging, except it hath 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*. Lam. iii. 39, 'Why doth a living man complain?' He that hath deserved a hanging hath no reason to charge the judge with cruelty if he escape with a whipping; and we that 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. iii. 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 i. 22, 'In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.' When God charges many men home, 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 thou art under affliction, thou mayest humbly tell God that thou feelest his hand heavy; but thou must not blame him because his hand is heavy. No man hath ever yet been able to make good a charge against God; and wilt thou be able? Surely no. By charging God foolishly in the day of thy calamity, thou dost but provoke the Lord to charge thee through and through, more fiercely and furiously, with his most deadly darts of renewed misery. It is thy greatest wisdom to blame thy sins, and lay thy hand upon thy mouth; for why should folly charge innocence? That man is for enough 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. xv. 18, 'Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable?' &c. Though God hath always reason for what he doth, yet he is not bound to shew 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, chap. vii. 20, 'Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee, so that I am a burden to myself?' It is an evil and a dangerous thing to cavil at or to question his proceedings, who is the chief Lord of all, and who may do with his own what he pleaseth, Rom. ix. 20, Dan. iv. 3, 36. He is unaccountable and uncontrollable; and therefore who shall say, What doest thou? As no man may question his 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 him to give a reason of his doings, so no man may dare to ask him the particular reasons of his doings. Kings think themselves 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 reason and only rule of

justice? Eccles. viii. 4, Rev. i. 5. The general grounds and reasons that God hath laid down in his word why he afflicts his people, as, viz., for their profit, Heb. xii. 10; for the purging away of their sins, Isa i. 25; for the reforming of their lives, Ps. cxix. 67, 71; and for the saving of their souls, 1 Cor. xi. 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 look, as the drunkard will never be satisfied, be the cup never 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<sup>1</sup> till 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 by gazing and prying into the body of 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 hath laid down in his word why he afflicts and tries the children of men.

I have read of one Sir William Champney, in the reign of King Henry the Third, once living in Tower Street, London, who was the first man that ever built a turret on the top of his house, that he might the better overlook all his neighbours, but so it fell out, that not long after he was struck blind; so that he that could not be satisfied to see as others did see, but would needs see more than others, saw just 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 he 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 that are locked up in the golden cabinet of God's own breast, Deut. xxix. 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 m consciences, so they may but break off the chains that are upon them; who care not by what means the prison door is opened, so they may but escape; nor by what hands their bolts are knocked off, so they Clay be at liberty.* Job xxxvi. 21, 'Take heed, regard not iniquity, for this hast thou chosen rather than affliction.' He makes but an ill choice, who chooses sin rather than suffering; and yet such an ill choice good men have sometimes made, as you may see by the proofs in the margin, 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, then there is in the greatest miseries and afflictions that can possibly come upon you; yea, there is more evil in the least sin than there is in all the troubles that ever come upon the world, yea, 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 a 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 a close prisoner in hell for ever 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; the very thought of sin, if but thought on, 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 with bodkins; Herod was eaten up of lice; Pope Adrian was choked with a gnat; a mouse is but little, yet killeth 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, and the least leak sink the greatest ship; a whole arm hath been impostumated with the prick of a little finger; a little postern opened may betray the greatest city; a dram of poison diffuseth itself into all parts, till it strangle the vital spirits, and turn 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 great instance of Adam and Eve. The trees of the forest, saith one in a parable, held a solemn parliament, wherein they consulted of the innumerable wrongs which the axe had done them, therefore made an act, that no tree should hereafter lend the axe an helve, on pain of being cut clown. The axe travels up and down the forest, begs wood of the cedar, oak, ash, elm, even of the poplar; not one would lend him a chip. At last he desired so much as would serve him to cut down the briars and bushes, alleging, that such shrubs as they did but suck away the juice of the ground, and hinder the growth, and obscure the glory of the fair and goodly trees; hereupon they were all content to afford him so much: he pretends a thorough reformation, but behold a sad deformation, for when he had got his helve, down went both cedar, oak, ash, elm, and all that stood in his way. Such are the subtle reaches of sin; it will promise to remove the briars, and business of afflictions and troubles, that hinder the soul of that juice, sweetness, comfort, delight, and content that otherwise it might enjoy. Oh! do but now yield a little to it, and instead of removing your troubles, it will cut down your peace, your hopes, your

comforts, yea, it will cut down your precious soul. What is the breathing of a vein to the being let blood in the throat, or 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, till 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 near this six thousand years; they had not been now in chains, could they but have sinned themselves out of their chains. Could the damned sin themselves out of everlasting burning, there would have been none now a-roaring in that devouring unquenchable fire, Isa. xxxiii. 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, contract the sea in a nut-shell, compass the earth with a span, 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 prejudicial, 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 labouring to sin yourselves out of less troubles, you will sin yourselves into greater troubles, as Saul did; and by endeavouring 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; thus did Spira, Jerome of Prague, Bilney, and others. Some there have been, who, by labouring to sin themselves out of their present sufferings, have sinned themselves under such horrors and terrors of conscience, that they could neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep, but have been ready to lay violent hands upon themselves.

And Cyprian, in his sermon *de lapsis*, speaks of divers who, forsaking the faith to avoid sufferings, were given over to be possessed of evil spirits, and died fearfully. O man! thou doest not know what deadly sin, what deadly temptation, what deadly judgment, what deadly stroke, thou mayest fall under, who attempts to sin thyself out of troubles. What is it to take Venice, and to be hanged at the gates thereof? It is better to be silent and mute under thy afflictions, than by using sinful shifts to sin thyself under greater afflictions.

(4.) Fourthly, *Consider it is a very ignoble and unworthy thing to go to stab 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, Dan. iii. 8, vi., Heb. xi. 21. As you may see in the three 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 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 bishopric than yield to certain 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; but when all this would not do they caused him to be set in the sun, having his naked body anointed all over with honey, that so he might be bitten and stung to death by flies and wasps; and all this cruelty they exercised upon him, because he would not do anything towards the rebuilding of that idol temple; nay, they came so far, that if he would but give one halfpenny towards the charge, 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 practise, viz., that Christians must choose rather to suffer the worst of torments, than commit the least of sins, whereby God should be dishonoured, his name blasphemed, religion reproached, profession scorned, weak saints discouraged, and 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 labour to sin, and shift yourselves out of them, and so proclaim to all the world, that you are persons of very low, poor, and ignoble spirits? But

(5) Fifthly, Consider, *sinful shifts and means God hath 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 a talent of silver and two changes of raiment, and that with a lie, I say with a lie; well! he hath them, and he hath with them a leprosy that cleaved to him and his seed for ever, 2 Kings v. 22-27. With those very hands that Judas took money to betray his master, with those very hands he fitted a halter to hang himself. The rich and wretched glutton fared delicately, and



went bravely every day, but the next news you hear of him, is of his being in hell, crying out for a drop, 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 taking of him, poured melted gold down his throat.

Dionysius did not long enjoy the fruit of his sacrilege and tyranny, for he was glad to change his sceptre into a ferule, and turn schoolmaster for his maintenance. 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 dear.* 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. xxvi. 75, 'He went forth and wept bitterly.'

Clement observes, That every night when he heard the 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 that 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; which that I may, give me leave to propound some considerations, to engage your souls to be mute and silent under your greatest troubles and your saddest trials. To that purpose,

1. Consider first, *the greatness, sovereignty, majesty, and dignity of God, and let that move thee to silence,* Jer. X. 7; v. 22: Ps. xlii. 8-10, 'Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God: I will lie exalted among the heathens, I will be exalted in the earth.' Who can cast his eye upon the greatness of God, the majesty of God, and not sit still before him? Zeph. i. 7, 'Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God.' Oh, chat 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? and shall not a Christian be quiet before that God that can bathe his sword in heaven, and burn the chariots on earth? Nay, 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. v. 5. God is mighty in power, and mighty in counsel, and mighty in working, and mighty in punishing; and 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, saith, 'Who is like unto thee among the gods?' Now certainly this epithet should be a mighty motive to work souls to that which Habakkuk persuaded to: Hab. ii. 20, 'The Lard is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.' Upon this very consideration Moses commands Israel to hold their peace, Exod. xiv. 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 dumb. O my brethren, shall not the brightness and splendour 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. viii. 28, 'And we know that all things shall work together for good to them that 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, &c., out of all the bitter afflictions and trials he exercises then with. That scouring and rubbing, which frets others, shall make them shine the brighter; and that weight which crushes and keeps others under, 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, till they were in mourning; the Christ's cross, saith Luther, is no letter in the book, and yet, saith he, it hath 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 distil 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 beat upon by the waves, stand like a rock, immovable, and that they are battered by the roughness of the waters. 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 that be 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, Ps. xxv. 10, Deut. xxvi. 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 honour, 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: and 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, that lends a hand of support to every grace*, Rom. xv. 4. Silence is *custos*, the keeper, 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 &c. A holy silence hath its influences upon all other graces that be in the soul; it causes the rosebuds of grace to blossom and bud forth. Silence is *virtus versata circa adversa*, 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 honours 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 than those you are under*, Lam. iii. 39; Micah vii. 7-9. Hath God taken away one mercy? Thou hast deserved to be stripped of all. Hath he taken away the delight of thine eyes? He might have taken away the delight of thy soul. Art thou under outward wants? Thou hast deserved to be under outward and inward together. Art thou cast upon a sick bed? Thou hast deserved a bed in hell. Art thou under that ache and that pain? Thou hast deserved to be under all aches and pains at once. Hath God chastised thee with whips? Thou hast deserved to be chastised with scorpions, 1 Kings xii. 14. Art thou fallen from the highest pinnacle of honour to be the scorn and contempt of men? Thou hast deserved to be scorned and contemned by God and angels. Art thou under a severe whipping? Thou hast 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 smartest 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 persons of a quiet spirit: 1 Peter iii. 4. 'But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.' 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 that God makes very great reckoning 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 close 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. v. 29-25. 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, yea, 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 persons 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 that purchases it, though it were with the loss of all. But,

6. Sixthly, Consider, *That if you sit not 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, yea, that it may be done on the earth, as the angels, those glistening courtiers, those princes of glory, do it now in heaven! Mat. vi. 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, and 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 doth, 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 continence with a proviso, Lord! give me continence, but not yet; and some there be 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, yea, 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 that lie as heavy weights upon a murmurer, will lie as light as a feather upon a mute Christian, Micah vii. 7-10, Ps. xcii. 1, 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. And therefore, as ever you would have heavy afflictions light, and be able to bear a burden without a burden, labour as for life after this holy silence.

b. Eighthly, Consider *that a holy silence under afflictions will be your best armour of proof against those temptations that addictions may expose you to.* Times of afflictions often prove times of great temptations, and therefore afflictions are called temptations: James i. 12, 'Blessed is the man which endureth temptations, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life,' &c. 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, James iv. 7, 1 Peter v. 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 hath a great hand in all the temptations that come upon us, so he hath a great hand in all the afflictions that befall us; as you see in that great instance of Job.

(3.) Because, as temptations drive men to God, 2 Cor. xii. 7, 8, so do afflictions, Isa. xxvi. 16, Hosea v. 15; but mainly because Satan chooses times of afflictions as the fittest seasons for his temptations. When Job was sorely addicted 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 the hindmost of them Deut. xxv. 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 angels. 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 that afflictions lay us open to. Silence in afflictions is a Christian's armour of proof; it is that shield that no spear or dart of temptation can pierce. Whilst a Christian lies 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 lie, yea, 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', Luke xxi. 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 honours, and riches, and dear relations and the favour and assistance of friends under his trials, but he will never come to a possession of his own soul under his troubles till he comes to be mute, and to lay his hand upon his mouth. Now what are all earthly possessions to the possession of a man's own soul? He that possesses himself possesses all; he that 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 that 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, Prov. xvi. 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, *Semper eadem*, 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:* Zech. ii. 13, 'Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord, for he is raised up out of his holy habitation;' Isa. xli 1, 'Keep silence before me, O islands;' Hab. ii. 20, 'The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him;' Amos v. 13, 'Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time, for it is an evil time;' Ps. xlvi. 10, 'Be still, and know that I am God;' Ps. iv. 4, 'Commune with your heart, and be still;' Exod. xiv. 13, 'Stand still, and see the salvation of God;' 2 Chron. xx. 17, 'Stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord, with you, O Judah, and Jerusalem;' Job xxxvii. 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 pretence of revelation from God, is as much as a man's life is worth, as you may see in that sad story, 1 Kings xiii. 24, &c. Divine commands must be 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? Nay, 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? 2 Sam. xiii. 28, 29, 'Now Absalom had commanded his servant, saying, Mark ye now when Amnon's heart is merry with

wine, and when I say unto you, Smite Amnon: then kill him, fear not: have not I commanded you? be courageous, and be valiant. And the servants of Absalom did unto Amnon as Absalom had commanded.' 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 near two miles every day for a whole year together, to pour upon a dry stick, upon the bare command of his confessor.

I have also read of the old kings of Peru, that they were wont 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 persons 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. *Prior est autoritas imperantis, quam utilitas servientis* [Tertullian]. 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 shall mutter, charge another of those commands upon your hearts; and if after this, they shall 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, till 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.* Exod. xiv., they were in very great straits. Pharaoh with a mighty army was behind them, the Red Sea before them, mountains on each hand 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.* Ps. xxxix. 9, David is dumb, he sits mute under his smart 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. 'He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the mire and clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song into my mouth, even praise unto our God; many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.' 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, his spirit was quiet and calm. 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26, 'And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it and his habitation. But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.' And the same calmness and quietness of spirit was upon him when Shimei bitterly cursed him, and railed upon him, chap. xvi. 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 post 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.

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