

The Mute Christian under the Smarting Rod

Part III

By Thomas Brooks

(1.) First, Consider that murmuring *speaks out many a root of bitterness to be strong in thy soul*, Heb. iii. 12. Murmuring speaks out sin in its power, corruption upon its throne, Heb. xii. 1. As holy silence argues true grace, much grace, yea, grace in its strength and in its lively vigour, so murmuring, muttering under the hand of God, argues much sin, yea, a heart full of sin; it speaks out a heart full of self-love, Exod. xv. 24; xvi. 7, 8; and full of slavish fears, Numb. xiii. 32, 33; xiv. 1-3; and full of ignorance, John vi. 41, 42; and full of pride and unbelief, Ps. cvi. 24, 25: 'yea, they despised the pleasant land,' or the land of desire, Ps. lxxvii. 19, 20: there is their pride; 'they believed not in his word': there is their unbelief; what follows? They murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of God. They were sick of the sullens, and preferred Egypt before Canaan, a wilderness before a paradise. As in the first chaos there were the seeds of all creatures, so in the murmurer's heart there is not only the seeds of all sin, but a lively operation of all sin. Sin is become mighty in the hearts of murmurers, and none but all almighty God can root it out. 'Those roots of bitterness have so spread and strengthened themselves in the hearts of murmurers, that everlasting strength must put in, or they will be undone for ever, Isa. xxvi. 4. But,

(2.) Secondly, consider, *That the Holy Ghost hath set a brand of infamy upon murmurers. He hath stigmatised them for ungodly persons*: Jude 16, 16, 'To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.' But who are these ungodly sinners? 'They are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts,' &c.' ver. 16. When Christ comes to execute judgment upon ungodly ones, murmurers shall be set in the front, they shall experience the fierceness of his wrath and the greatness of his wrath. The front, you know, is first assaulted, and most strongly assaulted. Christ will bend all his power and strength against murmurers; his little finger shall be heavier upon them, than his loins shall be upon others, 1 Kings xii. 11, 14; other sinners shall be chastised with whips, but ungodly murmurers shall be chastised with scorpions. If you can joy in that black character of ungodly sinners, be murmurers still; if not, cease from murmurings. Where murmuring is in its reign, in its dominion, there you may speak and write that person ungodly. Let murmurers make what profession they will of godliness, yet if murmuring keeps the throne in their hearts Christ will deal with them at last as ungodly sinners. A man may be denominated ungodly, as well from his

murmuring, if he lives under the dominion of it, as from his drunkenness, swearing, whoring, lying, stealing, &c. A murmurer is an ungodly man, he is an ungodlike man; no man on earth more unlike to God than the murmurer; and therefore no wonder if when Christ comes to execute judgment, he deals so severely and terribly with him. In the wars of Tamberlain, one having found a great pot of gold, that was hid in the earth, he brought it to Tamberlain, who asked whether it had his father's stamp upon it? But when he saw that it had not his father's stamp, but the Roman stamp upon it, he would not own it, but cast it away. The Lord Jesus, when he shall come with all his saints to execute judgment, Oh! he will not own murmurers; nay, he will cast them away for ever, because they have not his Father's stamp upon them. Ah, souls! souls! as you would not go up and down this world with a badge of ungodliness upon you, take heed of murmuring.

(3.) Thirdly, Consider *that murmuring is the mother-sin; it is the mother of harlots, the mother of all abominations; a sin that breeds many other sins, viz.,* disobedience, contempt, ingratitude, impatience, distrust, rebellion, cursing, carnality; yea, it charges God with folly, yea, with blasphemy, Num. xvi. 41, xvii. 10, Judges xvii. 2. The language of a murmuring, a muttering soul is this, Surely God might have done this sooner, and that wiser, and the other thing better, &c. As the river Nilus bringeth forth many crocodiles, and the scorpion many serpents at one birth, so murmuring is a sin that breeds and brings forth many sins at once. Murmuring is like the monster hydra; cut off one head, and many will rise up in its room. Oh! therefore, bend all thy strength against this mother-sin. As the king of Syria said to his captains, 'Fight neither with small nor great, but with the king of Israel', 1 Kings xxii. 31, so say I, Fight not so much against this sin or that, but fight against your murmuring, which is a mother-sin. Make use of all your Christian armour, make use of all the ammunition of heaven, to destroy the mother, and in destroying of her, you will destroy the daughters, Eph. vi. 10, 11. When Goliath was slain, the Philistines fled. When a general in an army is cut off, the common soldiers are easily and quickly routed and destroyed. So, destroy but murmuring, and you will quickly destroy disobedience, ingratitude, impatience, distrust, &c. Oh, kill this mother-sin, that this may never kill thy soul. I have read of Sennacherib, that after his army was destroyed by an angel, Isa xxxvii., and he returned home to his own country, he inquired of one about him, what he thought the reason might be why God so favoured the Jews? He answered that there was one Abraham, their father, that was willing to sacrifice his son to death at the command of God, and that ever since that time God favoured that people. Well, said Sennacherib, if that be so, I have two sons, and I will sacrifice them both to death, if that will procure their God to favour me; which, when his two sons heard, they, as the story goeth, slew their fattier, Isa. xxxvii. 38, choosing rather to kill than to be killed. So do thou choose rather to kill this mother-sin than to be killed by it, or by any of those vipers that are brought forth by it, Ps. cxxxvii. 8, 9.

(4.) Fourthly, Consider that *murmuring is a God-provoking sin; it is a sin that*

provokes God not only to afflict, but also to destroy a people: Num. xiv. 27-29, 'How long shall I bear with this evil congregation which murmur against me? I have heard the murmuring of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the Lord, as you have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you. Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness, and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me.' 1 Cor. x. 10, 'Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.' All our murmurings do but provoke the Lord to strike us and destroy us.

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

(5.) Fifthly, Consider, *That murmuring is the devil's image, sin and punishment.* Satan is still a-murmuring; he murmurs at every mercy that God bestows, at every dram of grace he gives, Job i. 8, 9; he murmurs at every sin he pardons, and at every soul he saves. A soul cannot have a good look from heaven, nor hear a good word from heaven, nor receive a love-letter from heaven, but Satan murmurs at it; he murmurs and mutters at every act of pitying grace, and at every act of preventing grace, and at every act of supporting grace, and at every act of strengthening grace, and at every act of comforting grace that God exercises towards poor souls; he murmurs at every sip, at every drop, at every crumb of mercy that God bestows. Cyprian, Aquinas, and others conceive that the cause of Satan's banishment from heaven was his grieving and murmuring at the dignity of man, whom he beheld made after God's own image, insomuch that he would relinquish his own glory, to divest so noble a creature of perfection, and rather lie in hell himself, than see Adam placed in paradise. But certainly, after his fall, murmuring and envy at man's innocence and felicity put him upon attempting to plunge man into the bottomless gulf of sin and misery; he knowing himself to be damned, and lost for ever, would needs try all ways how to make happy man eternally unhappy. Mr Howell tells it as a strange thing, that a serpent was found in the heart of an Englishman when he was dead; but, alas! this old serpent was by sad experience found to have too much power in the heart of Adam whilst alive, and whilst in the height of all his glory and excellency. Murmuring is the first-born of the devil; and nothing renders a man more like to him than murmuring. Constantine's sons did not more resemble their father, nor Aristotle's scholars their master, nor Alexander's soldiers their general, than murmurers do

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

(6.) Sixthly, Consider, *That murmuring is a mercy-embittering sin, an mercy-souring sin*; as put the sweetest things into a sour vessel, it sours them, or put them into a bitter vessel, and it embitters them. Murmuring puts gall and wormwood into every cup of mercy that God gives into our hands. As holy silence gives a sweet taste, a delightful relish, to all a man's mercies, so murmuring embitters all. The murmurer can taste no sweetness in his sweetest morsels; every mercy, every morsel, tastes like the white of an egg to him, Job vi. 6. This mercy, saith the murmurer, is not toothsome, nor that mercy is not wholesome; here is a mercy wants salt, and there is a mercy wants sauce. A murmurer can taste no sweet, can feel no comfort; he can take no delight in any mercy he enjoys. The murmurer writes *marah*, that is, bitterness, upon all his mercies, and he reads and tastes bitterness in all his mercies. All the murmurer's grapes are grapes of gall, and all their clusters are bitter, Deut. xxxii. 23. As to 'the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet', Prov. xxvii. 7, so to the murmuring soul every sweet thing is bitter. The mute Christian can suck sweetness from every breast of mercy, but the murmurer cries out, Oh it is bitter! Oh these breasts of mercy are dry!

(7.) Seventhly, Consider, *That murmuring is a mercy-destroying sin, a mercy-murdering sin*. Murmuring cuts the throat of mercy; it stabs all our mercies at the heart; it sets all a man's mercies a-bleeding about him at once: Num. xiv. 30, 'Doubtless ye shall not come into the land concerning which I sware to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.' God promises them that they should possess the holy land upon the condition of their obedience. This condition they brake; and therefore God was not foresworn though he cut them off in the wilderness, and kept them out of Canaan, Dent. xxxi. 16, 17. But what is the sin that provokes the Lord to bar them out of the land of promise, and to cut them off from all those mercies that they enjoyed which entered into the holy land? Why, it was their murmuring, as you may see in Numbers xiv. 1-3, 26-29. As you love your mercies, as you would have the sweet of your mercies, and as you would enjoy the life of your mercies, take heed of murmuring. Murmuring will bring a consumption upon your mercies; it is a worm that will make all your mercies to wither. As there be some that love their mercies into the grave, and others that plot their mercies into the grave, so there be some that murmur their mercies into the grave. As you would have your mercies always fresh and green, smiling and thriving, as you would have your mercies to bed and board with you, to rise up and lie down with you, and in all conditions to attend you, murmur not, murmur not. The mute Christian's mercies are most

sweet and most long-lived; the murmurer's mercies, like Jonah's gourd, will quickly wither. Murmuring hath cut the throat of national mercies, of domestic mercies, and of personal mercies; and therefore, oh how should men fly from it as from a serpent! as from the avenger of blood, yea, as from hell itself!

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

(9.) Ninthly, Consider, *That murmuring unmans a man*; it strips him of his reason and understanding; it makes him call evil good, and good evil; it puts light for darkness and darkness for light, bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter; it calls saviours destroyers, and deliverers murderers Isa. v. 18-20, as you see in the murmuring Israelites, Exod. xiv.-xvi. Murmuring uncrowns a man. The murmurer may say, 'My crown is fallen from my head', Lam. v. 16. Murmuring strips a man of all his glory; it spoils all his excellency; it destroys the nobility of man; it speaks him out to be a base ignoble creature. Murmuring clouds a man's understanding; it perverts the judgment, it puts out the eye of reason, stupefies his conscience; it sours the heart, disorders the will, and distempers the affections; it be-beasts a man, yea, it sets him below the beasts that perish; for he were better be a beast, than be like a beast. The murmurer is the hieroglyphic of folly; he is a comprehensive vanity; he is a man and no man; he is sottish and senseless: he neither understands God nor himself nor anything as he should; he is the man that must be sent to school, to learn of the beasts of the field, and the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the earth, how to cease from murmuring, and how to be mute, Isa. iii. 8, Jer. vii. 6. Ah! sirs, as you would have the name, the honour, the reputation of being men, I say men, Take heed of murmuring, and sit silent before the Lord.

(10.) Tenthly, *Murmuring is a time-destroying sin*. Ah! the precious time that is buried in the grave of murmuring? When the murmurer should be a-praying, he is a-murmuring against the Lord; when he should be a-hearing, he is a-murmuring against the divine providences; when he should be a-reading, he is a-murmuring against instruments. The murmurer spends much precious time in musing; in musing how to get out of such a trouble, how to get off such a yoke, how to be rid

of such a burden, how to revenge himself for such a wrong, how to supplant such a person, how to reproach those that are above him, and how to affront those that are below him; and a thousand other ways murmurers have to expend that precious time that some would redeem with a world; as Queen Elizabeth on her deathbed cried out, 'Time, time, a world of wealth for an inch of time.' The murmurer lavishly and profusely trifles away that precious time, that is his greatest interest in this world to redeem, Eph. v. 16. Every day, every hour in the day, is a talent of time, and God expects the improvement of it, and will charge the non-improvement of it upon you at last, Rev. ii. 21, 25; 1 Peter iv. 2. Caesar observing some ladies in Rome to spend much of their time in making much of little dogs and monkeys, asked them, Whether the women in that country had no children to make much of? Ah! murmurers, murmurers, you who by your murmuring, trifle away so many godly hours and seasons of mercy, have you no God to honour? have you no Christ to believe in? have you no hearts to change, no sins to be pardoned, no souls to save, no hell to escape, no heaven to seek after? Oh! If you have, why do you spend so much of your precious time in murmuring against God, against men, against this or that thing? Eternity rides upon the back of time. *Hoc est momentum*, this is the moments if it be well improved, you are made for ever; if not, you are undone for ever. *Aut male, aut nihil, aut aliud agendo*.

I have read of Archias a Lacedaemonian [Plutarch], that whilst he was rioting and quaffing in the midst of his cups, one delivers him a letter, purposely to signify that there were some that lay in wait to take away his life, and withal desires him to read it presently, because it was a serious business and matter of high concernment to him. Oh, said he *seria cras*, I will think of serious things to-morrow; but that night he was slain. Ah! murmurer, cease from murmuring to-day, or else thou mayest be for ever unclosed by murmuring to-morrow. The old saying, *Nunc aut nunquam*, now or never; so say I, Now or never, now or never give over murmuring, and let it swallow up no more of your precious time. What would not many a murmurer give for one of those days, yea, for one of those hours which he hath trifled away in murmuring, when it is a day too late!

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

(11.) Eleventhly, Consider this, Christians, *that of all men in the world, you have least cause, yea, no cause, to be murmuring and muttering under any dispensation that you meet with in this world*. Is not God thy portion? Chrysostom propounds this question, Was Job miserable when he had lost all that God had given him? and gives this answer, No, he had still the God that gave him all. Is not Christ thy treasurer? Is not heaven thine inheritance? and wilt thou murmur? Hast thou not much in hand, and more in hope? Hast thou not much in

possession, but much more in reversion; and wilt thou murmur? Hath not God given thee a changed heart, a renewed nature, and a sanctified soul; and wilt thou murmur? Hath he not given thee himself to satisfy thee, his Son to save thee, his Spirit to lead thee, his grace to adorn thee, his covenant to assure thee, his mercy to pardon thee, his righteousness to clothe thee; and wilt thou murmur? Hath he not made thee a friend, a son, a brother, a bride, an heir; and wilt thou murmur? Hath not God often turned thy water into wine, thy brass into silver, and thy silver into gold; and wilt thou murmur? When thou wast dead, did not he quicken thee; and when thou wast lost, did not he seek thee; and when thou wast wounded, did not he heal thee; and when thou were falling, did not he support thee; and when thou were down, did not he raise thee; and when thou were staggering, did not he establish thee; and when thou were erring, did not he reduce thee; and when thou were tempted, did not he succour thee; and when thou went in dangers, did not he deliver thee; and wilt thou murmur? What! thou that art so highly advanced and exalted above many thousands in the world? Murmuring is a black garment, and it becomes none so ill as saints.

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

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

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

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

1. First, *If thy heart be drawn more out to the Lord by thy afflictions, then the afflictions are in love*. If they are so sanctified as that they draw out thy soul to love the Lord more, and to fear the Lord more, and to please the Lord more, and to cleave to the Lord more, and to wait on the Lord more, and to walk with the

Lord more, then they are in love. Oh, then they are the wounds of a friend indeed! It is reported of the lioness, that she leaves her young whelps till they have almost killed themselves with roaring and yelling, and then at the last gasp, when they have almost spent themselves, she relieves them, and by this means they become more courageous; and so if the afflictions that are upon us do increase our courage, strengthen our patience, raise our faith, inflame our love, and enliven our hopes, certainly they are in love, and all our wounds are the wounds of a friend. But

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

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

3. Thirdly, *If you enjoy the special presence of God with your spirits in your affliction, then your affliction is in love*, Ps. xxiii. 4-6. Isa. xliii. 2, 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee.' Hast thou a special presence of God with thy spirit, strengthening of that, quieting of that, stilling of that, satisfying of that, cheering and comforting of that? Ps. xciv. 19, 'In the multitude of my thoughts,'—that is, of my troubled, intricate, ensnared, intertwined and perplexed thoughts, as the branches of a tree by some strong wind are twisted one within another, as the Hebrew word properly signifies,— 'thy comforts delight my soul.' Here is a presence of God with his soul, here is comforts and delights that reach the soul, here is a cordial to strengthen the spirit. When all things went cross with Andronicus, the old emperor of Constantinople, he took a Psalter into his hand,

and opening the same, he lighted upon Ps. lxxviii. 14, 'When the Almighty scattered kings, they shall be white as snow in Salmon;' which scripture was a mighty comfort and refreshment to his spirit. Now you are to remember that Salmon signifies shady and dark; so was this mount, by the reason of many lofty fair-spread trees that were near it, but made lightsome by snow that covered it. So that to be white as snow in Salmon, is to have joy in affliction, light in darkness, mercy in misery, &c. And thus God was to the psalmist as snow in Salmon in the midst of his greatest afflictions. When Paul would wish his dear son Timothy the best mercy in all the world, the greatest mercy in all the world, the most comprehensive mercy in all the world, a mercy that carries the virtue, value, and sweetness of all mercies in it, he wishes the presence of God with his spirit: 2 Tim. iv. 22, 'The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit', in point of honour, in point of profit and pleasure, in point of safety and security, and in point of comfort and joy; it is the greatest blessing and happiness in this world to have the presence of God with our spirits, especially in times of trials: 2 Cor. iv. 16, 'For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.' By the 'outward man,' you are to understand not merely our bodies, but our persons, estates, and outward condition in this world; and by the 'inward man,' you are to understand our souls, our persons considered according to our spiritual estate. Now, when the inward man gains new strength by every new trouble, when as troubles, pressures, afflictions, and tribulations are increased, a Christian's inward strength is increased also, when his afflictions are in love. When the presence of God is with our inward man, cheering, comforting, encouraging, strengthening, and renewing of that, we may safely conclude that all these trials, though they are never so sharp and smart, yet they are in love.

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

4. Fourthly, *If by your affliction you are made more conformable to Christ in his virtues, there certainly your afflictions are in love.* Many are conformable to Christ in their sufferings, that are not made conformable to Christ in his virtues by their sufferings; many are in poverty, neglect, shame, contempt, reproach, &c., like to Christ, who yet by these are not made more like to Christ in his meekness,

humbleness, heavenliness, holiness, righteousness, faithfulness, fruitfulness, goodness, contentedness, patience, submission, subjection. Oh! but if in these things you are made more like to Christ, without all peradventure your afflictions are in love. If by afflictions the soul be led to shew forth, or to preach forth, the virtues of Christ, as that word imports in that 1 Peter ii. 9, then certainly those afflictions are in love; for they never have such an operation but where they are set on by a hand of love. When God strikes as an enemy, then all those strokes do but make a man more an enemy to God, as you see in Pharaoh and others; but when the strokes of God are the strokes of love, oh! then they do but bring the soul nearer Christ, and transform the soul more and more into the likeness of Christ, Isa. xxvi. 8-10. Jer. vi. 3, Amos vi. 1. If by thy afflictions thou art made more holy, humble, heavenly, &c., they are in love. Every afflicted Christian should strive to be honoured with that eulogy of Salvian, *Singularis doimini praeclarus imitator*, an excellent disciple of a singular master. But,

5. Fifthly, *If by outward afflictions thy soul be brought more under the inward teachings of God, doubtless thy afflictions are love*, Job xxxiv. 31, 32: Ps. xciv. 12, 'Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law.' All the chastening in the world, without divine teaching, will never make a man blessed; that man that finds correction attended with instruction, and lashing with lessoning, is a happy man. If God, by the affliction that is upon thee shall teach thee how to loathe sin more, how to trample upon the world more, and how to walk with God more, thy afflictions are in love. If God shall teach thee by afflictions how to die to sin more, and how to die to thy relations more, and how to die to thy self-interest more, thy afflictions are in love. If God shall teach thee by afflictions how to live to Christ more, how to lift up Christ more, and how to long for Christ more, thy afflictions are in love. If God shall teach thee by afflictions to get assurance of a better life, and to be still in a gracious readiness and preparedness for the day of thy death, thy afflictions are in love. If God shall teach thee by afflictions how to mind heaven more, how to live in heaven more, and how to fit for heaven more, thy afflictions are in love. If God by afflictions shall teach thy proud heart how to lie more low, and thy hard heart how to grow more humble, and thy censorious heart how to grow more charitable, and thy carnal heart how to grow more spiritual, and thy froward heart how to grow more quiet, &c., thy afflictions are in love. When God teaches thy reins as well as thy brains, thy heart as well as thy head, these lessons, or any of these lessons, thy afflictions are in love. Pambo, an illiterate dunce, as the historian terms him, was a-learning that one lesson, 'I said I will take heed to my ways that I sin not with my tongue,' nineteen years, and yet had not learned it. Ah! it is to be feared that there are many who have been in the school of affliction above this nineteen years, and yet have not learned any saving lesson all this while. Surely their afflictions are not in love, but in wrath. Where God loves, he afflicts in love, and wherever God afflicts in love, there he will, first or last, teach such souls such lessons as shall do them good to all eternity. But,

(6.) Sixthly, *If God suit your burdens to your backs, your trials to your strength,*

according to that golden promise, 1 Cor. X. 13, your afflictions are in love. 'There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.' When God's strokes and a Christian's strength are suited one to another, all is in love, Isa. xxvii. 8, Jer. xxx. 11, xlvi. 28. Let the load be never so heavy that God lays on, if he put under his everlasting arms, all is in love, Gen. xlix. 23, 24. As Egypt had many venomous creatures, so it had many antidotes against them. When God shall lay antidotes into the soul against all the afflictions that befall a Christian, then they are all in love. It is no matter how heavy the burden is, if God gives a shoulder to bear it: all is in love; it is no matter how bitter the cup is, if God give courage to drink it off; it is no matter how hot the furnace is, if God gives power to walk in the midst of it: all is in love.

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

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

(8.) *Eighthly and lastly, If you live a life of faith in your afflictions, then your afflictions are in love.* Now, what is it to live by faith in affliction, but to live in the

exercising of faith upon those precious promises that are made over to an afflicted condition? God hath promised to be with his people in their afflictions, Isa. xliii. 2, 3; he hath promised to support them under their affliction, Isa. xli. 10; he hath promised to deliver his people out of their afflictions, Ps. l. 15; he hath promised to purge away his people's sins by affliction, Isa. i. 25; he hath promised to make his people more partakers of his holiness by affliction, Heb. xii. 10; he hath promised to make affliction an inlet to a more full and sweet enjoyment of himself, Hos. ii. 14; he hath promised that he will never leave nor forsake his people in their afflictions, Heb. xiii. 5, 6; he hath promised that all their afflictions shall work for their good, Zech. xiii. 9; Rom. viii. 28. Now if thy faith be drawn forth to feed upon these promises, if these be heavenly manna to thy faith, and thy soul lives upon them, and sucks strength and sweetness from them, under all the trials and troubles that are upon thee, thy afflictions are in love.

A bee can suck honey out of a flower, which a fly cannot. If thy faith can extract comfort and sweetness in thy mildest distresses, out of the breasts of precious promises, and gather one contrary out of another, honey out of the rock, Deut. xxxii. 13, thy afflictions are in love. The promises are full breasts, and God delights that faith should draw them; they are *pabulum fidei, et anima fidei*, the food of faith, and the very soul of faith; they are an everlasting spring that can never be drawn dry; they are an inexhaustible treasure that can never be exhausted; they are the garden of paradise, and full of such choice flowers that will never fade, but be always fresh, sweet, green and flourishing; and if, in the day of affliction, they prove thus to thy soul, thy afflictions are in love. Sertorius paid what he promised with fair words, but so doth not God. Men many times eat their words, but God will never eat his; all his promises in Christ are yea and in him amen, 1 Cor. i. 20. Hath he spoken it, and shall it not come to pass? If in all thy troubles thy heart be drawn forth to act faith upon the promises, thy troubles are from love. And thus much by way of answer to the first objection.

Obj. 2. Oh, but, sir! the Lord hath smitten me in my nearest and dearest comforts and contentments, and how then can I hold my peace? God hath taken away a husband, a wife, a child, an only child, a bosom-friend, and how then can I be silent? &c

Ans. To this I answer,

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

(2.) Secondly, *The best mercy is not too good for the best God.* The best of the best is not good enough for him who is goodness itself; the best child, the best yoke-fellow, the best friend, the best jewel in all thy crown must be readily resigned to thy best God. There is no mercy, no enjoyment, no contentment worthy of God, but the best. The milk of mercy is for others, the cream of mercy is due to God. The choicest, the fairest, and the sweetest flowers are fittest for the bosom of God; if he will take the best flower in all the garden, and plant it in a better soil, hast thou any cause to murmur? Wilt thou not hold thy peace? Mal. i. 13, 14.

(3.) Thirdly, *Your near and dear mercies were first the Lord's before they were yours, and always the Lord's more than they were yours.* When God gives a mercy, he doth not relinquish his own right in that mercy: 1 Chron. xxix. 14, 'All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.' The sweet of mercy is yours, but the sovereign right to dispose of your mercies is the Lord's. *Quicquid es, dees creanti; quicquid potes, debes redimenti* [Bernard], whatsoever thou art, thou owest to him that made thee; and whatsoever thou hast, thou owest to him that redeemed thee. You say it is but just and reasonable that men should do with their own as they please, and is it not just and reasonable that God, who is Lord paramount, should do with his own as he pleases? Dost thou believe that the great God may do in heaven what he pleases? and on the seas what he pleases? and in the nations and kingdoms of the world what he pleases? and in thy heart what he pleases? And dost thou not believe that God may do in thy house what he pleases, and do with thy mercies what he pleases? Job ix. 12, 'Behold, be taketh away', or he snatcheth away, it may be a husband, a wife, a child, an estate, 'who call hinder him? Who will say unto him, what doest thou? Who dares cavil against God? Who dares question that God that is unquestionable, that chief Lord that is uncontrollable, and who may do with his own what he pleaseth? Dan. iv. 35, 'And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? Where is the prince, the peasant, the master, the servant, the husband, the wife, the father, the child, that dares say to God' What doest thou? Isa. xiv. 9. In matters of arithmetical accounts, set one against ten, ten against a hundred, a hundred against a thousand, a thousand against ten thousand, although there be great odds, yet there is some comparison; but if a man could set down an infinite number, then there could be no comparison at all, because the one is infinite, the other finite; so set all the princes and powers of the earth in opposition to God, they shall never be able to withstand him. It was once the saying of Pompey, that with one stamp of his foot he could raise all Italy in arms; but let the great God but stamp with his foot, and he can raise all the world in arms, to own him, to contend for him, or to revenge any affronts that by any are put upon him, and therefore who shall say unto him, What doest thou? Water is stronger than earth, fire stronger than water, angels stronger than men, and God stronger than them all; and therefore who shall say unto God, What doest thou; when he takes their nearest and their dearest mercies from them? But,

(4.) Fourthly, *It may be thou hast not made a happy improvement of thy near and dear mercies whilst thou enjoyedst them.* Thou hast been taken with thy mercies, but thy heart hath not been taken up in the improvement of them. There are many who are very much taken with their mercies, who make no conscience of improving their mercies. Have thy near and dear mercies been a star to lead thee to Christ? Have they been a cloud by day, and a pillar of light by night, to lead thee towards the heavenly Canaan? Have they been a Jacob's ladder to thy soul? Hast thou by them been provoked to give up thyself to God as a living sacrifice? Rom. xii. 1. Hast thou improved thy near and dear mercies to the inflaming of thy love to God, to the strengthening of thy confidence in God, to the raising of thy communion with God, and to the engaging of thy heart to a more close and circumspect walking before God? &c. If thou hast not thus improved them, thou hast more cause to be mute than to murmur to be silent than to be impatient, to fall out with thyself than to fall out with thy God. Children and fools are taken with many things, but improve nothing. Such children and fools are most men; they are much taken with their mercies, but they make no improvement of their mercies; and therefore no wonder if God strip them of their mercies. The candle of mercy is set up not to play by, but to work by.

Pliny speaks of one Cressinus, who improved a little piece of ground to a far greater advantage than his neighbours could a greater quantity of land. Thereupon he was accused of witchcraft; but he, to defend himself, brought into the court his servants and their working tools, and said, *Veneficia mnea, Quirites, haec sunt*, these are my witchcrafts, O ye Romans; these servants, and these working tools, are all the witchcraft that I know of. When the people heard this plea, with one consent they acquitted him, and declared him not guilty; and so his little piece of ground was secured to him. There is no way to secure your mercies but by improving of them; there is nothing that provokes God to strip you of your mercies like the non-improvement of them: Mat. xxv. 28-31, 'Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.' By some stroke or other God will take away the mercy that is not improved. If thy slothfulness hath put God upon passing a sentence of death upon the dearest mercy, thank thyself, and hold thy peace.

(5.) Fifthly, *If in this case God had made thee a precedent to others, thou must have held thy peace; how much more, then, should thou be mute where God has made many others precedents to thee!* Did not God smite Aaron in his dear and near enjoyments, Lev. x. 1, 2 and does he not hold his peace? Did not God smite David in his Absalom, and Abraham in his Sarah, and Job in his sons, daughters, estate, and body, and Jonah in his gourd? Art thou more beloved than these? No. Hast thou more grace than these? No. Hast thou done more for divine glory than these? No. Art thou richer in spiritual experiences than these? No. Hast thou attained to higher enjoyments than these? No. Hast thou been more serviceable in thy generation than these? No. Hast thou been more exemplary in thy life and conversation than these? &c. No. Then why should thou murmur and fret at that

which hath been the common lot of the dearest saints?

Though God hath smitten thee in this or that near and dear enjoyment, it is thy wisdom to hold thy peace, for that God that has taken away one, might have taken away all. Justice writes a sentence of death upon all Job's mercies at once, and yet he holds his peace, Job i.; and wilt not thou hold thine, though God hath cropped the fairest flower in all thy garden?

Anytus, a young spark of Athens, came revelling into Alcibiades's house; and as he sat at supper with some strangers, he arose on a sudden, and took away one half of his place. Thereupon the guests stormed, and took on at it. He bade them be quiet, and told them that he had dealt kindly with him, since that he had left the one half, whereas he might have taken all. So when our hearts begin to storm and take on when God smites us in this near mercy and in that dear enjoyment, oh let us lay the law of silence upon our hearts! let us charge our souls to be quiet! for that God that hath taken away one child, might have taken away every child; and he that hath taken away one friend, might have taken away every friend; and he that hath taken away a part of thy estate, might have taken away thy whole estate: therefore hold thy peace; let who will murmur, yet be thou mute.

(6.) Sixthly, *It may be thy sins have been much about thy near and dear enjoyments.* It may be thou hast over-loved there, and over-prized them, and over-much delighted thyself in them; it may be they have often had thy heart, when they should have had but thy hand; it may be that care, that fear, that confidence, that joy that should have been expended upon more noble objects, has been expended upon them. Thy heart, O Christian! is Christ's bed of spices, and it may be thou best bedded thy mercies with thee, when Christ hath been put to lie in an outhouse, Luke ii. 7; thou hast had room for them, when thou hast had none for him; they have had the best, when the worst have been counted good enough for Christ. It is said of Reuben, that he went up to his father's bed, Gen. xlix. 4. Ah! how often hath one creature comfort and sometimes another put in between Christ and your souls! how often have your dear enjoyments gone up to Christ's bed! It is said of the Babylonians, that they came in to Aholah and Aholibah's bed of love, Ezek. xxiii. 17; may it not be said of your near and dear mercies, that they have come into Christ's bed of love, your hearts; they being that bed wherein Christ delights to rest and repose himself? Cant. iii. 7. Now, if a husband, a child, a friend shall take up that room in thy soul that is proper and peculiar to God, God will either embitter it, remove it, or be the death of it. If once the love of a wife runs out more to a servant than to her husband, the master will turn him out of doors, though otherwise he were a servant worth gold. The sweetest comforts of this life, they are but like treasures of snow; now do but take a handful of snow, and crush it in your hands, and it will melt away presently; but if you let it lie upon the ground, it will continue for some time. And so it is with the contentments of this world; if you grasp them in your hands and lay them too near your hearts, they will quickly melt and vanish away; but if you will not hold them too fast in your hands, nor lay them too close to your hearts, they will abide

the longer with you. There are those that love their mercies into their graves, that hug their mercies to death, that kiss them till they kill them. Many a man hath slain his mercies, by setting too great a value upon them; many a man hath sunk his ship of mercy, by taking up in it; over-loved mercies are seldom long lived: Ezek. xxiv. 21, 'When I take from them the joy of their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that whereupon they set their minds, their sons and their daughters.' The way to lose your mercies is to indulge them; the way to destroy them is to fix your minds and hearts upon them. Thou mayest write bitterness and death upon that mercy first that hath first taken away thy heart from God. Now, if God hath stripped thee of that very mercy with which thou hast often committed spiritual adultery and idolatry, hast thou any cause to murmur? Hast thou not rather cause to hold thy peace, and to be mute before the Lord? Christians, your hearts are Christ's royal throne, and in this throne Christ will be chief, as Pharaoh said to Joseph, Gen. xii. 40; he will endure no competitor. If you shall attempt to throne the creature, be it never so near and dear unto you, Christ will dethrone it, he will destroy it; he will quickly lay them in a bed of dust who shall aspire to his royal throne. But,

(7.) *Seventhly, You have no cause to murmur because of the loss of such near and dear enjoyments, considering those so noble and spiritual mercies and favours that thou still enjoyest.* Grant that Joseph is not, and Benjamin is not, Gen. xlii. 36, yet Jesus is; he is yesterday, and today, and the same for ever, Heb. xiii. 8; thy union and communion with Christ remains still; the immortal seed abides in thee still, 1 John iii. 9; the Sun of righteousness shines upon thee still; thou art in favour with God still, and thou art under the anointings of the Spirit still, and under the influences of heaven still, &c.; and why then shouldst thou mutter, and not rather hold thy peace? I have read of one Didymus, a godly preacher, who was blind; Alexander, a godly man, once asked him, whether he was not sore troubled and afflicted for want of his sight? Oh yes! said Didymus, it is a great addiction and grief unto me. Then Alexander chid him, saying, Hath God given you the excellency of an angel, of an apostle, and are you troubled for that which rats and mice and brute beasts have? So say I. Ah, Christians! hath God blessed you with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places? Eph. i. 3, 4. Hath the Lord given you himself for a portion? Has he given you his Son for your redemption, and his Spirit for your instruction; and will you murmur? Hath he given his grace to adorn you, his promises to comfort you, his ordinances to better you, and the hopes of heaven to encourage you; and will you mutter? Paulinus Nolanus, when his city was taken from him, prayed thus: Lord! said he, let me not be troubled at the loss of my gold, silver, honour, &c., for thou art all, and much more than all these unto me. In the want of all your sweetest enjoyments, Christ will be all in all unto you, Col. iii. 11. My jewels are my husband, said Phocion's wife; my ornaments are my two sons, said the mother of the Gracchi; my treasures are my friends, said Constantius; and so may a Christian under his greatest losses say, Christ is my richest jewels, my chiefest treasures, my best ornaments, my sweetest delights. Look what all these things are to a carnal heart, a worldly heart, that and more is Christ to me.

(8.) Eighthly, *If God, by smiting thee in thy nearest and dearest enjoyments, shall put thee upon a more thorough smiting and mortifying of thy dearest sins, thou hast no cause to murmur.* God cures David of adultery by killing his endeared child. There is some Delilah, some darling, some beloved sin or other, that a Christian's calling, condition, constitution, or temptations leads him to play withal, and to hag in his own bosom, rather than some other, Ps. xviii. 23, Heb. xii. 1. As in a ground that lieth untilled, amongst the great variety of weeds there is usually some master-weed that is rifer and ranker than all the rest; and as it is in the body of man, that although in some degree or other, more or less, there be a mixture of all the four elements not any of them wholly wanting, yet there is some one of them predominant that gives the denomination, in which regard some are said to be of a sanguine, some of a phlegmatic, some of a choleric, and some of a melancholic constitution; so it is also in the souls of men: though there be a general mixture and medley of all evil and corrupt qualities, yet there is some one usually that is paramount, which, like the prince of devils, is most powerful and prevalent, that swayeth and sheweth fort itself more eminently and evidently than any other of them do. And as in every man's body there is a seed and principle of death, yet in some there is a proneness to one kind of disease more than other that may hasten death; so, though the root of sin and bitterness hath spread itself over all, yet every man hath his inclination to one kind of sin rather than another, and this may be called a man's proper sin, his bosom sin, his darling sin. Now, it is one of the hardest works in this world to subdue and bring under this bosom sin. Oh! the prayers, the tears, the sighs, the sobs, the groans, the gripes that it will cost a Christian before he brings under this darling sin!

Look upon a rabbit's skin, how well it comes off till it comes to the head, but then what hauling and pulling is there before it stirs! So it is in the mortifying, in the crucifying of sin; a man may easily subdue and mortify such and such sins, but when it comes to the head-sin, to the master-sin, to the bosom-sin, oh! what tugging and pulling is there! what striving and struggling is there to get off that sin, to get down that sin! Now, if the Lord, by smiting thee in some near and dear enjoyment, shall draw out thy heart to fall upon smiting of thy master-sin, and shall so sanctify the affliction, as to make it issue in the mortification of thy bosom corruption, what eminent cause wilt thou have rather to bless him, than to sit down and murmur against him! And doubtless if thou art dear to God, God will, by striking thy dearest mercy, put thee upon striking at thy darling sin; and therefore hold thy peace, even then when God touches the apple of thine eye.

(9.) Ninthly, consider *That the Lord has many ways to make up the loss of a near and dear mercy to thee;* he can make up thy loss in something else that may be better for thee, and he will certainly make up thy loss, either in kind or in worth, Matt. xix. 27-30. He took from David an Absalom, and he gave him a Solomon; he took from him a Michal, and gave him a wise Abigail; he took from Job seven sons and three daughters, and afterwards he gives him seven sons and three daughters; he took from Job a fair estate, and at last doubled it to him; he

removed the bodily presence of Christ from his disciples, but gave them more abundantly of his spiritual presence, which was far the greater and the sweeter mercy. If Moses be taken away, Joshua shall be raised in his room; if David be gathered to his fathers, a Solomon shall succeed him in his throne; if John be cast into prison, rather than the pulpit shall stand empty, a greater than John, even Christ himself will begin to preach! He that lives upon God in the loss of creature comforts, shall find all made up in the God of comforts; he shall be able to say, Though my child is not, my friend is not, my yoke-fellow is not, yet my God liveth, and 'blessed be my rock,' Ps. lxxxix. 26. Though this mercy is not, and that mercy is not, yet covenant-mercies, yet 'the sure mercies of David' continue, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5; these bed and board with me, these will to the grave and to glory with me. I have read of a godly man, who, living near a philosopher, did often persuade him to become a Christian. Oh! but, said the philosopher, I must, or may lose all for Christ; to which the good man replied, if you lose anything for Christ, he will be sure to repay it a hundred-fold. Ay, but, said the philosopher, will you be bound for Christ, that if he doth not pay me, you will? Yes, that I will, said the good man. So the philosopher became a Christian, and the good man entered into bond for performance of covenants. Some time after it happened that the philosopher fell sick on his deathbed, and, holding the bond in his hand, sent for the party engaged, to whom he gave up the bond, and said, Christ hath paid all, there is nothing for you to pay, take your bond, and cancel it. Christ will suffer none of his children to go by the loss; he hath all, and he will make up all to them. In the close, Christ will pay the reckoning. No man shall ever have cause to say that he hath been a loser by Christ. And, therefore, thou hast much cause to be mute, thou hast no cause to murmur, though God hath snatched the fairest and the sweetest flower out of thy bosom.

(10.) Tenthly, *How canst thou tell but that which thou callest a near and dear mercy, if it had been continued longer to thee, might have proved the greatest cross, the greatest calamity and misery that ever thou didst meet with in this world?* Our mercies, like choice wines, many times turn into vinegar; our fairest hopes are often blasted; and that very mercy which we sometimes have said should be a staff to support us, hath proved a sword to pierce us. How often have our most flourishing mercies withered in our hands, and our bosom contentments been turned into gall and wormwood! If God had continued the life of David's child to him, it would have been but a living monument of his sin and shame; and all that knew the child would have pointed at him, yonder goes David's bastard; and so have kept David's wound still a-bleeding, 2 Sam. xii. 16. Many parents who have sought the lives of their children with tears, have lived afterwards to see them take such courses and come to such dismal ends as have brought their grey head with sorrow to their graves. It had been ten thousand times a greater mercy to many parents to have buried their children so soon as ever they had been born, than to see them come to such unhappy ends as they often do. Well! Christian, it may be the Lord hath taken from thee such a hopeful son, or such a dear daughter, and thou sayest, How can I hold my peace? but hark, Christian, hark, canst thou tell me how long thou must have travailed in birth with them

again before they had been twice born? Would not every sin that they had committed against thy gracious God caused a new throe in thy soul? Would not every temptation that they had fallen before been as a dagger at thy heart? Would not every affliction that should have befallen them been as a knife at thy throat? What are those paints, and pangs, and throes of child-birth to those after pains, pangs, and throes that might have been brought upon thee by the sins and sufferings of thy children? Well! Christians, hold your peace, for you do not know what thorns in your eyes, what goads in your sides, nor what spears in your hearts, such near and dear mercies might have proved had they been longer continued.

(11.) Eleventhly, *Thou canst not tell how bad thy heart might have proved under the enjoyment of those near and dear mercies that now thou hast lost.* Israel were very bad whilst they were in the wilderness, but they were much worse when they came to possess Canaan, that land of desires. Man's blood is apt to rise with the outward good. In the winter, men gird their clothes close about them, but in the summer they let them hang loose. In the winter of adversity, many a Christian girds his heart close to God, to Christ, to gospel, to godliness, to ordinances, to duties, &c., who in the summer of mercy hangs loose from all.

I have read of the pine tree, that, if the bark be pulled off, it will last a long time; but if it continue long on, it rots the tree. Ah! how bad, how rotten, how base, would many have proved, had God not pulled off their bark of health, wealth, friendship! &c. Near and dear relations, they stick as close to us as the bark of a tree sticks to the tree, and if God should not pull off this bark, how apt should we be to rot and corrupt ourselves; therefore God is fain to bark us, and peel us, and strip us naked and bare of our dearest enjoyments and sweetest contentments, that so our souls, like the pine tree, may prosper and thrive the better. Who can seriously consider of this, and not hold his peace, even then when God takes a jewel out of his bosom? Heap all the sweetest contentments and most desirable enjoyments of this world upon a man, they will not make him a Christian; heap them upon a Christian, they will not make him a better Christian. Many a Christian hath been made worse by the good things of this world; but where is the Christian that hath been bettered by them? Therefore be quiet when God strips thee of them.

(12.) Twelfthly, and lastly, *Get thy heart more affected with spiritual losses, and then thy soul will be less afflicted with those temporal losses that thou mournest under.* Hast thou lost nothing of that presence of God that once thou hadst with thy spirit? Hast thou lost none of those warnings, meltings, quickenings, and cheerings that once thou hadst? Hast thou lost nothing of thy communion with God, nor of the joys of the Spirit, nor of that peace of conscience that once thou enjoyedst? Hast thou lost none of that ground that once thou hadst got upon sin, Satan, and the world? Hast thou lost nothing of that holy vigour and heavenly heat that once thou hadst in thy heart? If thou hast not, which would be a miracle, a wonder; why dost thou complain of this or that temporal loss? For what is this

but to complain of the loss of thy purse, when thy God is safe? If thou art a loser in spirituals, why dost thou not rather complain that thou hast lost thy God than that thou hast lost thy gold; and that thou hast lost thy Christ than that thou hast lost thy husband; and that thou hast lost thy child, and that thou art damnified in spirituals than that thou art damnified in temporals? Dost thou mourn over the body the soul hath left? mourn rather over the soul that God hath forsaken, as Samuel did for Saul, saith one. 1 Sam. xv. 14, seq.

I have read of Honorius, a Roman emperor, who was simple and childish enough; when one told him Rome was lost, he was exceedingly grieved, and cried out, Alas! alas! for he supposed that it was his hen that was called Rome, which hen he exceedingly loved; but when it was told him it was his imperial city of Home, that was besieged by Alaricus, and taken, and all the citizens rifled, and made a prey to the rude enraged soldiers, then his spirits were revived that his loss was not so great as he imagined. Now, what is the loss of a husband, a wife, a child, a friend, to the loss of God, Christ, the Spirit, or the least measure of grace or communion with God? &c. I say, What are all such losses, but the loss of a hen to the loss of Rome? And yet so simple and childish are many Christians, that they are more affected and afflicted with the loss of this and that poor temporal enjoyment than they are with the loss of their most spiritual attainments. Ah, Christians! be but more affected with spiritual losses, and you will be more quiet and silent under temporal losses. Let the loss of Rome trouble you more, and then the loss of your hen will not trouble you at all. Let these things suffice for answer to the second objection.

Obj. 3. Oh, but my afflictions, my troubles have been long upon me! and how then can I hold my peace? Were they but of yesterday, I would be quiet; but they are of a long continuance; and therefore how can I be silent, &c.

To this I answer,

(1.) First, *Thou canst not date thy afflictions from the first day of thy pollution.* Thou hast been polluted from the womb, but thou hast not been afflicted from the womb, Ps. li. 5; many have been the days, the years, since thou was born in sin; few have been the days, the years, that thou hast experienced sorrow. Thou can not easily number the days of thy sinning, thou can easily number the days of thy sufferings; thou can not number thy days of mercy, thou can easily number thy days of calamity; thou can not number thy days of health, but thou can easily tell over thy days of sickness.

(2.) Secondly, *Thy afflictions are not so long as the afflictions of other saints.* Compare thy winter nights and other saints' winter nights together; thy storms and troubles and other saints' storms and troubles together; thy losses and other saints' losses together; thy miseries and other saints' miseries together; witness the proofs in the margin. Thy afflictions are but as a moment, they are but as yesterday compared with the afflictions of other saints, whose whole lives have

been made up of sorrows and sufferings, as the life of Christ was. Many a man's life hath been nothing but a lingering death: Job xxi. 25, 'And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure.' There are those that have never a good day all their days, who have not a day of rest among all their days of trouble nor a day of health among all their days of sickness, nor a day of gladness among all their days of sadness, nor a day of strength among all their days of weakness, nor a day of honour among all their days of reproach; whose whole life is one continued winter's night, who every day drink gall and wormwood, who lie down sighing, who rise groaning, and who spend their days in complaining, 'No sorrow to our sorrow, no sufferings to our sufferings!' Some there be who have always tears in their eyes, sorrows in their hearts, rods on their backs, and crosses in their hands: but it is not so with thee; therefore be silent.

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

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

(5.) Fifthly, *The longer you have been afflicted, the more in spiritual experiences you have been enriched*: 2 Cor. i. 5, 'For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.' The lower the ebb the higher the tide, the more pain the more gain, the more afflicted the more comforted, the lower we are cast the higher we shall be raised. Of all Christians, none so rich in spiritual experiences, as those that have been long in the school of affliction. Oh! the blessed stories that such call tell of the power of God supporting them, of the wisdom of God directing them, of the favour of God comforting them, of the presence of God assisting them. Oh! the love-tokens, the love-letters, the bracelets, the jewels that they are able to produce since they have been in the furnace of affliction. Oh! the sin that long afflictions have discovered and mortified. Oh! the temptations that long afflictions have prevented and vanquished. You shall as soon number the stars of heaven and the sands of the sea, as you shall number up the heavenly experiences of such Christians that have been long under afflictions. The afflicted Christian's heart is fullest of spiritual treasure. Though he may be poor in the world, yet he is rich in faith and holy experiences, James ii. 5; and what are all the riches of this world to spiritual experiences? One spiritual experience is more worth than a world, and upon a dying bed and before a judgment-seat, every man will be of this opinion. The men of this world will with much quietness and calmness of spirit bear much, and suffer much, and suffer long, when they find their sufferings to add to their revenues; and shall nature do more than grace? It is the common voice of nature, 'Who will shew us any good' Ps. iv. 6; how shall we come to be great, and high, and rich in the world? We care not what we suffer, nor how long we suffer, so we may but add house to house, heap to heap, bag to bag, and land to land, Isa v. 8. Oh how much more then should Christians be quiet and calm under all their afflictions, though they are never so long, considering that they do but add jewels to a Christian's crown; they do but add to his spiritual experiences. The long afflicted Christian hath the fullest and the greatest trade; and in the day of account, will be found the richest man.

(6.) Sixthly, *Long afflictions sometimes are but preparations to long-lived mercies*. Joseph's thirteen years' imprisonment was but a preparative to fourscore years, reigning like a king; David's seven years' banishment was but a preparative to forty years' reigning in much honour and glory; Job's long afflictions were but preparatives to more long-lived mercies, as you may see in that last of Job; and those sad and sore trials that the Jews have been under for above these sixteen hundred years, are to prepare them for those matchless mercies, and those endless glories, in some sense, that God in the latter days will crown them with: Isa. liv. 11-14, 'O thou afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundation with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children. In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression, for thou shalt not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near thee.' Though they have been

long afflicted and tossed, yet they shall at last upon glorious foundations be established; God will not only raise them out of their distressed estate wherein now they are, but he will advance them to a most eminent and glorious condition in this world; they shall be very glorious, and outshine all the world in spiritual excellencies and outward dignities: Isa. lx. 14, 16, 'The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee, and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet: and they shall call thee, the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations.' Ah, Christians! do not mutter nor murmur under your long afflictions, for you do not know but that by these long afflictions God may prepare and fit you for such favours and blessings that may never have end. By long afflictions God many times prepares his people for temporal, spiritual, and eternal mercies. If God by long afflictions makes more room in thy soul for himself, his Son, his Spirit, his word; if by long afflictions he shall crucify thy heart more to the world and to thy relations, and frame and fashion thy soul more for celestial enjoyments; hast thou any cause to murmur? Surely no. But,

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

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

[2.] *Secondly, The longer a grandsons soul is afflicted, the more his religious duties will be multiplied.* Ps. cix. 4, 'For my love they are my adversaries; but I give myself unto prayer;' or as the Hebrew reads it, 'But I am prayer,' or 'a man of prayer.' In times of afflictions a Christian is all prayer; he is never so much a man of prayer, a man given up to prayer, as in times of affliction. A Christian is never so frequent, so fervent, so abundant in the work of the Lord, as when he is afflicted: Is. xxvi. 16, 'Lord! in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them.' Now, they do not only pray, but they pour out a prayer; they were freely, largely, and abundantly in prayer when the rod was upon them. Look! as men plentifully pour out water for the quenching of a fire, so did they plentifully pour out their prayers before the Lord; and as affliction puts a man upon being much in prayer, so it puts him upon other duties

of religion answerably. Now, this is most certain, that though God will reward no man *for* his works, yet he will reward every man *according* to his works: 1 Cor. xv. 58, 'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.' 2 Cor. ix. 6, 'But this I say, he which soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully;' or he which soweth in benedictions or blessings shall reap in benedictions, as it runs in the original.

It is an excellent observation of Calvin upon God's rewarding the Rechabites' obedience, Jer. xxxv. 19; God, saith he, oft recompenseth the shadows and seeming-appearance of virtue, to shew what complacency he takes in the ample rewards he hath reserved for true and sincere piety. Now, if the longer a Christian is afflicted, the more his religious services will be multiplied, and the more they are multiplied, the more his glory at last will be increased, then the longer a saint is afflicted on earth, the more glory he shall have when he comes to heaven. But,

[3.] Thirdly, *The longer any saint is afflicted, the more into the image and likeness of Christ he will be transformed.* It is one of God's great designs and ends in afflicting of his people, to make them more conformable to his Son; and God will not lose his end. Men often lose theirs, but God never hath nor will lose his; and experience tells us that God doth every day, by afflictions, accomplish his end upon his people. The longer they are afflicted, the more they are made conformable to Christ in meekness, lowliness, spiritualness, heavenliness, in faith, love, self-denial, pity, compassion, &c. Now certainly, the more like to Christ, the more beloved of Christ. The more a Christian is like to Christ, the more he is the delight of Christ; and the more like to Christ on earth, the nearer the soul shall sit to Christ in heaven. Nothing makes a man more conformable to Christ than afflictions. Justin Martyr, in his second Apology for the Christians, hath observed, that there is scarce any prediction or prophecy concerning our Saviour, Christ the Son of God, to be made man, but the heathen writers, who were all after Moses, did from thence invent some fable, and feign it to have been acted by some one or other of Jupiter's sons; only the prophecies about the cross of Christ they have taken for the ground of no fable. They have not, among all their fictions, told us of any one of Jupiter's sons that was crucified, that acted his part upon the cross. Many would wear the crown with Christ, that do not care for bearing the cross with Christ. But,

(8.) Eighthly, *The longer they have been, the greater cause thou hast to be silent and patient, for impatience will but lengthen out the day of the sorrows.* Every impatient act adds one link more to the chain; every act of frowardness adds one lash more to those that have already been laid out; every act of muttering will but add stroke to stroke, and sting to sting; every act of murmuring will but add burden to burden, and storm to storm. The most compendious way to lengthen out thy long afflictions is to fret, and vex, and murmur under them. As thou would

see a speedy issue of thy long afflictions, sit mute and silent under them.

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

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

Obj. 4. I would be mute and silent under my afflictions, but my afflictions daily multiply and increase upon me; like the waves of the sea, they come rolling over the neck of one another, &c.; and how then can I hold my peace? How can I lay my hand upon my mouth, when the sorrows of my heart are daily increased?

To this I answer thus:

(1.) First, *Thy afflictions are not so many as thy sins*, Ps. x1. 12. Thy sins are as the stars of heaven, and as the sand upon the sea, that cannot be numbered. There are three things that no Christian can number: 1, his sins; 2, divine favours; 3, the joys and pleasures that be at Christ's right hand; but there is no Christian so poor an accountant, but that he may quickly sum up the number of his troubles and afflictions in this world. Thy sins, O Christian, are like the Syrians that filled the country, but thy afflictions are like the two little flocks of kids that pitched before them, 1 Kings xx. 27; therefore hold thy peace.

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

(3.) Thirdly, *They are not so many as God might have exercised thee with.* God could as easily exercise thee with ten as with two, and with a hundred as with ten, and with a thousand as with a hundred. Let thy afflictions be never so many, yet they are not so many as they might have been, had God either consulted with thy sins, with thy deserts, or with his own justice. There is no comparison between those afflictions that God hath inflicted upon thee, and those that he might have inflicted. Thou hast not one burden of a thousand that God could have laid on, but he would not; therefore hold thy peace.

(4.) Fourthly, *Thy afflictions are not so many as thy mercies, nay, they are not to be named in the day wherein thy mercies are spoken of.* What are thy crosses to thy comforts, thy miseries to thy mercies, thy days of sickness to thy days of health, thy days of weakness to the days of strength, thy days of scarcity to thy days of plenty? And this is that the wise man would have us seriously to consider: Eccles. vii. 14, 'In the day of adversity consider,'—but what must we consider?—'that God hath set the one over against the other.' As God hath set winter and summer, night and day, fair weather and foul, one over against another, so let us set our present mercies over against our present troubles, and we shall presently find that our mercies exceed our trouble, that they mightily over-balance our present afflictions; therefore let us be silent, let us lay our hands upon our mouths.

(5.) Fifthly, *If you cast up a just and righteous account, you will find that they are not so many as the afflictions that have befallen other saints.* Have you reckoned up the afflictions that befell Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Asaph, Haman, the prophets and apostles? If you have, you will say that your afflictions are no afflictions to those that have befallen them; their lives were filled up with sorrows

and sufferings, but so are not yours; therefore kiss the rod and be silent. It may be, If thou lookest upon thy relations, thy friends, thy neighbours, thou mayest find many whose afflictions for number and weight do much outweigh thine; therefore be silent, murmur not, hold thy peace.

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

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

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

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

Ans. (1.) To this I answer, *Though they are great, yet they are not so great as thy sins, thyself being judge; therefore hold thy peace:* Ezra ix. 13, 'And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespasses, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve.' They that were under the sense and guilt of great sins, have cause to be silent under their greatest

sufferings. Nearer complain that thy afflictions are great, till thou canst say that thy sins are not great. It is but justice that great afflictions should attend great sins; therefore be quiet. Thy sins are like great rocks and mighty mountains, but so are not thy afflictions; therefore lay thy hand upon thy mouth. The remembrance of great sins should cool and calm a man's spirit under his greatest troubles; and if the sense of thy great sins will not stop thy mouth and silence thy heart, I know not what will.

(2.) Secondly, *It may be they are not great, if you look upon them with Scripture spectacles*, 1 Peter v. 10. Flesh and blood many times looks upon molehills as mountains, and scratches upon the hand as stabs at the heart; we make elephants of flies, and of little pigmies we frame giants. Carnal reason often looks upon troubles through false glasses. As there are some glasses that will make great things seem little, so there are others that will make little things seem great, and it may be that thou lookest upon thy afflictions through one of them, Isa liv. 7, 8. Look upon thy afflictions in the glass of the word; look upon them in a Scripture dress, and then they will be found to be but little. He that shall look into a gospel glass, shall be able to say, heavy afflictions are light, long afflictions are short, bitter afflictions are sweet, and great afflictions are little, 2 Cor. iv. 16-18. It is good to make a judgment of your afflictions by a gospel light and by a gospel rule.

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

(3.) Thirdly, *The greater thy afflictions are, the nearer is deliverance to thee*. When these waters rise high then salvation comes upon the wings; when thy troubles are very great, then mercy will ride post to deliver thee: Deut. xxxii. 36, 'For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power (or hand) is gone, and there is none shut up, and left.' Israel of old, and England of late years, hath often experienced this truth. Wine was nearest, when the water-pots were filled with water up to the brim, John ii 1-11; so oftentimes mercy is nearest, deliverance is nearest, when our afflictions

are at the highest. When a Christian is brim-full of troubles, then the wine of consolation is at hand; therefore hold thy peace, murmur not, but sit silent before the Lord.

(4.) Fourthly, *They are not great, if compared to the glory that shall be revealed*, 2 Cor. iv. 16-18: Rom. viii. 18, 'For I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us, or upon us.' The apostle, upon casting up of his accounts, concludes that all the pains, chains, troubles, trials, and torments that they meet with in this world, was not to be put in the balance with the glory of heaven. As the globe of the earth, which after the mathematicians' account is many thousands of miles in compass, yet being compared unto the greatness of the starry sky's circumference, is but a centre, or a little prick; so the troubles, afflictions, and sorrows of this life, in respect of eternal happiness and blessedness, are to be reputed as nothing; they are but as the prick of a pin to the starry heavens. They that have heard most of the glory of heaven, have not heard one quarter of that which the saints shall find there; that glory is inconceivable and inexpressible. Augustine in one of his epistles hath this relation: that the very same day wherein Jerome died, he was in his study, and had got pen, ink, and paper, to write something, of the glory of heaven to Jerome, and suddenly he saw a light breaking into his study, and a sweet smell that came unto him, and this voice he thought he heard: O Augustine! what doest thou? Dost thou think to put the sea into a little vessel? When the heavens shall cease from their continual motion, then shalt thou be able to understand what the glory of heaven is, and not before except you come to feel it as now I do. Nicephorus speaks of one Agbarus, a great man, that hearing so much of Christ's fame, by reason of the miracles he wrought, sent a painter to take his picture, and that the painter when he came was not able to do it, because of that radiance and divine splendour which sat on Christ's face. Such is the splendour, the brightness, the glory, the happiness, and blessedness that is reserved for the saints in heaven, that had I all the tongues of men on earth, and all the excellencies of the angels in heaven, yet should I not be able to conceive, nor to express that vision of glory to you. It is best hastening thither, that we may feel and enjoy that which we shall never be able to declare.

(5.) Fifthly, *They are not great, if compared with the afflictions and torments of such of the damned, who where they were in this world, never sinned at so high a rate as thou hast done*. Doubtless there are many now in hell, who never sinned against such clear light as thou hast done, nor against such special love as thou hast done, nor against such choice means as thou hast done, nor against such precious mercies as thou hast done, nor against such singular remedies as thou hast done. Certainly there are many now a-roaring in everlasting burnings, who never sinned against such deep convictions of conscience as thou hast done, nor against such close and strong reasonings of the Spirit as thou hast done, nor against such free offers of mercy and rich tenders of grace as thou hast done, nor against such sweet wooings and multiplied entreaties of a bleeding dying Saviour as thou hast done; therefore hold thy peace. What are thy afflictions, thy

torments, to the torments of the damned, whose torments are numberless, baseless, remediless, and endless; whose pains are without intermission of mitigation; who have weeping served in for the first course, and gnashing of teeth for the second, and the gnawing worm for the third, and intolerable pain for the fourth,—yet the pain of the body is but the body of pain, the very soul of Sorrow and pain is the soul's sorrow and pain,—and an everlasting alienation and separation from God for the fifth? Ah, Christian! how canst thou seriously think on these things and not lay thy hand upon thy mouth, when thou art under the greatest sufferings? Thy sins have been far greater than many of theirs, and thy great afflictions are but a flea-bite to theirs; therefore be silent before the Lord.

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

Object. 6. Oh! but my afflictions are greater than other men's afflictions are; and how then can I be silent? Oh! there is no affliction to my affliction; how can I hold my peace? I answer,

(1.) *First, It may be thy sins are greater than other men's sins,* Jer. iii. 6-12. If thou hast sinned against more light, more love, more mercies, more experiences, more promises than others, no wonder if thy afflictions are greater than others'. If this be thy case, thou hast more cause to be mute than to murmur; and certainly, if thou dost but seriously look into the black book of thy conscience, thou wilt find greater sins there than any thou canst charge upon any person or persons on earth. If thou shouldst not, I think thou wouldst justly incur the censure which that sour philosopher passed upon grammarians, viz., that they were better acquainted with the evils of Ulysses than with their own. Never complain that thy afflictions are greater than others', except thou can evidence that thy sins are lesser than others.

(2.) *Secondly, It may be thou art under some present distemper, that disenables thee to make a right judgment of the different dealings of God with thyself and others.* When the mind is distempered, and the brain troubled, many things seem to be that are not; and then little things seem very great. Oh! the strange passions, the strange imaginations, the strange conclusions, that attend a distempered judgment.

I have read of a foolish emperor, who, to shew the greatness of his city, made show of many spiders. When the mind is disturbed, men many times say they know not that, and do they know not what. It may be, when these clouds are blown over, and thy mind cleared, and thy judgment settled, thou wilt be of

another opinion. The supplicant woman appealed from drunken king Philip to sober king Philip. It is good to appeal from a distempered mind to a clear composed mind, for that is the way to make a righteous judgement of all the righteous dispensations of God, both towards ourselves and towards others.

(3.) Thirdly, *It may be that the Lord sees that it is very needful that thy afflictions should be greater than others.* It may be thy heart is harder than other men's hearts, and prouder and stouter than other men's hearts, it may be thy heart is more impure than others, and more carnal than others, or else more passionate and more worldly than others, or else more deceitful and more hypocritical than others, or else more cold and careless than others, or else more secure than others, or more formal and lukewarm than others. Now, if this be thy case, certainly God sees it very necessary, for the breaking of thy hard heart, and the humbling of thy proud heart, and the cleansing of thy foul heart, and the spiritualising of thy carnal heart, &c., that thy afflictions should be greater than others; and therefore hold thy peace. Where the disease is strong, the physic must be strong, else the cure will never be wrought. God is a wise physician, and he would never give strong physic if weaker could effect the cure, Jer. xxx. 11, and xlvi. 28; Isa. xxvii. 8. The more rusty the iron is, the oftener we put it into the fire to purify it; and the more crooked it is, the more blows and the harder blows we give to straighten it. Thou hast been long a-gathering rust; and therefore, if God deal thus with thee, thou hast no cause to complain.

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

(5.) Fifthly, *As thy afflictions are greater than other men's, so it may be thy mercies are greater than other men's mercies; and if so, thou hast no cause but*

to hold thy peace. As Job's afflictions were greater than other men's, so his mercies were greater than other men's, and Job wisely sets one against another, and then lays his hand upon his mouth, Job i. 21, 22. It may be thou hast had more health than others, and more strength than others, and more prosperity than others, and more smiling providences than others, and more good days than others, and more sweet and comfortable relations than others; and if this be thy case, thou hast much cause to be mute, thou hast no cause to murmur. If now thy winter nights be longer than others, remember thy summer days have formerly been longer than others; and therefore hold thy peace. But,

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

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

(1.) First, *No man is the less beloved because he is tempted; nay, those that God loves best are usually tempted most,* Eph. vi. 12. Witness David, Job, Joshua, Peter, Paul, yea, Christ himself, Mat. iv., who, as he was beloved above all others, so he was tempted above all others; he was tempted to question his Sonship; he was tempted to the worst idolatry, even to worship the devil himself; to the greatest infidelity, to distrust his Father's providence, and to use unlawful means for necessary supplies; and to self-murder, 'Cast thyself down,' &c. Those that were once glorious on earth, and are now triumphing in heaven, have been sorely tempted and assaulted. It is as natural and common for the choicest saints to be tempted, as it is for the sun to shine, the bird to fly, the fire to burn. The eagle complains not of her wings, nor the peacock of his train, nor the nightingale of her voice, because these are natural to them; no more should saints of their temptations, because they are natural to them. Our whole life, saith Austin, is nothing but a temptation; the best men have been worst tempted; therefore, hold

thy peace.

(2.) Secondly, *Temptation resisted and bewailed, will never hurt you, nor harm you.* Distasted temptations seldom or never prevail. So long as the soul distastes them and the will remains firmly averse against them, they can do no hurt; so long as the language of the soul is, 'Get thee behind me, Satan', Mat. xvi. 23, the soul is safe. It is not Satan tempting but my assenting, it is not his enticing but my yielding, that mischiefs me. Temptations may be troubles to my mind, but they are not sins upon my soul whilst I am in arms against them. If thy heart trembles and thy flesh quakes when Satan tempts, thy condition is good enough; if Satan's temptations be thy greatest afflictions, his temptations shall never worst thee nor harm thee; and therefore, if this be thy case, hold thy peace.

(3.) Thirdly, *Temptations are rather hopeful evidences that thy estate is good, that thou art dear to God, and that it shall go well with thee for ever, than otherwise.* God had but one Son without corruption but he had none without temptation, Heb. ii 17, 18. Pirates make the fiercest assaults upon those vessels that are most richly laden; so doth Satan upon those souls that are most richly laden with the treasures of grace, with the riches of glory. Pirates let empty vessels pass and repass, without assaulting them; so doth Satan let souls that are empty of God, of Christ, of the Spirit, of grace, pass and repass without tempting or assaulting of them. When nothing will satisfy the soul, but a full departure out of Egypt, from the bondage and slavery of sin, and that the soul is firmly resolved upon a march for Canaan, then Satan, Pharaoh-like, will furiously pursue after the soul with horses and chariots, that is, with a whole army of temptations Exod. xiv. 9. Well! a tempted soul when it is worst with him, may safely argue thus: If God were not my friend, Satan would not be so much my enemy; if there were not something of God within me, Satan would never make such attempts to storm me; if the love of God were not set upon me, Satan would never shoot so many fiery darts to wound me; if the heart of God were not towards me, the hand of Satan would not be so strong against me. When Beza was tempted, he made this answer, Whatsoever I was, Satan, I am now 'in Christ a new creature', and that is it which troubles thee; I might have so continued long enough ere thou would have vexed at it, but now I see thou dost envy me the grace of my Saviour. Satan's malice to tempt is no sufficient ground for a Christian to dispute God's love upon; if it were there is no saint on earth that should quietly possess divine favour a week, a day, an hour. The jailer is quiet, when his prisoner is in bolts, but if he be escaped, then he pursues him with hue and cry; You knew how to apply it. Men hate not the picture of a toad, the wolf flies not upon a painted sheep; no more doth Satan upon those he hath in chains; therefore hold thy peace, though thou art inwardly tempted, as well as outwardly afflicted.

(4.) Fourthly, *Whilst Satan is tempting of thee, Christ in the court of glory is interceding for thee:* Luke xxii 31, 32, 'And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed

for thee, that thy faith fail not. Satan would fain have been shaking of him up and down, as wheat is shaken in a fan; but Christ's intercession frustrates Satan's designed temptations. Whenever Satan stands at our elbow to tempt us, Christ stands at his Father's to intercede for us: Heb. vii. 2a, 'He ever lives to make intercession.' Some of the learned think, that Christ intercedes only by virtue of his merits; others think that it is done only with his mouth; probably it may be done both ways, the rather because he hath a tongue, as also a whole glorified body in heaven; and is it likely, that that mouth which pleads for us on earth, John xvii. should be altogether silent for us in heaven? Christ is a person of highest honour; he is the greatest favourite in the court of heaven; he always stands between us and danger. If there be any evil plotted or designed against us by Satan, the great accuser of the brethren, he foresees it, and by his intercession prevents it. When Satan puts in his pleas and commences suit upon suit against us, Christ still undertakes our cause; he answers all his pleas, and non-suits Satan at every turn, and in despite of hell he keeps us up in divine favour. When Satan pleads, Lord! here are such and such sins that thy children have committed! and here are such and such duties that they have omitted! and here are such and such mercies that they have not improved! and here are such and such ordinances that they have slighted! and here are such and such motions of the Spirit which they have quenched! divine justice answers, All this is true, but Christ hath appeared on their behalf; he hath pleaded their cause; he hath fully and fairly answered whatever hath been objected and given complete satisfaction to the utmost farthing; so that here is no accusation nor condemnation that can stand in force against them; upon which account the apostle triumphs in that Rom. viii 34, 'Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.' Christ's intercession should be the soul's anchor-hold in time of temptation. In the day of thy temptation thou needest not be disturbed nor disquieted, but in peace and patience possess thine own soul considering what a friend thou hast in the court of glory, and how he is most active for thee, when Satan is most busy in tempting of thee.

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

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

under the buffetings of Satan.

[2.] Secondly, *All their temptations shall be physical; their temptations shall be happy preventions of great abominations:* 2 Cor. xii 7, 'Lest I should be exalted, lest I should be exalted.' It is twice in that one verse; he begins with it, and he ends with it. If he had not been buffeted, he might have been more highly exalted in his own conceit than he was before in his ecstasy. Ah, tempted souls! you say you are naught, very naught, but had it not been for the school of temptation, you might have been stark naught before this time. You say you are sick, you are even sick to death. Why, your sickness had before this time killed you, had not temptations been physicals to you. You are bad under temptations; but doubtless you would have been much worse had not God made temptation a diet-drink to you.

[3.] Thirdly, *Temptation shall much promote the exercise of grace.* As the spring in the watch sets all the wheels a-going, and as Solomon's virtuous woman set all her maidens to work, so temptation sets faith on work, and love on work, and repentance on work, and hope on work, and holy fear on work, and godly sorrow on work, Prov. xxx. 10-33; 1 Peter i. 6. As the wind sets the mill at work, so the wind of temptations sets the graces of the saints a-going. Now faith runs to Christ, now it hugs a promise, now it pleads the blood of Christ, now it looks to the recompense of reward, now it takes the sword of the Spirit, &c.; now love cleaves to Christ, now love hangs upon Christ, now love will fight it out to the death for Christ; now hope flies to the horns of the sanctuary, now hope puts on her helmet, now hope casts her anchor upon that within the veil, &c. Grace is never more acted than when a Christian is most tempted. Satan made a bow of Job's wife; of his rib, as Chrysostom speaks, and shot a temptation by her at Job, thinking to have shot him to the heart: 'Curse God, and die;' but the activity of Job's graces was a breastplate that made him temptation-proof. The devil, tempting Bonaventure, told him he was a reprobate, and therefore persuaded him to drink in the present pleasures of this life; for, said he, thou art excluded from the future joys with God in heaven. Bonaventure's graces being active, he answered, No; not so, Satan: if I must not enjoy God after this life, let me enjoy him as much as I can in this life.

[4.] Fourthly, *By temptations the Lord will make you, the more serviceable and useful to others.* None so fit and able to relieve tempted souls, to sympathise with tempted souls, to succour tempted souls, to counsel tempted souls, to pity tempted souls, to support tempted souls, to bear with tempted souls, and to comfort tempted souls, as those who have been in the school of temptations: 2 Cor. i. 3, 4, 'Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.' By temptations God trains up his servants, and fits and capacitates them to succour and shelter their fellow-brethren. One tempted Christian, saith Luther, is more profitable and

useful to other Christians than a hundred, I may add, than a thousand, that have not known the depths of Satan, that have not been in the school of temptation. He that is master of arts in the school of temptation hath learned an art to comfort, to succour, and gently to handle tempted and distressed souls, infinitely beyond what all human arts can reach unto. No doctor to him that hath been a doctor in the school of temptation; all other doctors are but illiterate dunces to him.

[5.] Fifthly, *It is an honour to the saints to be tempted, and in the issue to have an honourable conquest over the tempter.* It was a great honour to David that he should be put to fight hand to hand with Goliath, and in the issue to overcome him, 1 Sam. xvii.; but it was far greater honour to Job and Paul, that they should be put to combat in the open field with Satan himself, and in the close to gain a famous conquest over him, as they did, Job i.; 2 Cor. xii. 7-10. It was a very great honour to David's three mighty men, that in jeopardy of their lives they brake through the host of the Philistines, to bring water to David out of the well of Bethlehem, and did effect it in spite of all the strength and power of their enemies, though it were to the extremest hazard of their blood and lives, 2 Sam. xxiii. 13-18; but it is a far greater honour to the saints to be furnished with a spirit of strength, courage, and valour, to break through an army of temptations, and in the close to triumph over them, Rom. viii. 13-18; and yet this honour have all the saints: 1 Cor. x. 13, 'But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it;' Rom. xvi. 20, 'And the God of peace shall tread Satan under your feet shortly;' 1 John ii. 13, 14, 'I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, children, because ye have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.' 1 John v. 18, 'We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not,' that is, 'that sin that is unto death,' ver. 16; nor he sinneth not as other men do delightfully, greedily, customarily, resolvedly, impenitently, &c. 'But he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.' The glorious victory that the people of God had over Pharaoh and his great host, Exod. xiv. was a figure of the glorious victory that the saints shall obtain over Satan and his instruments which is clear from that Rev. xv. 3, where we have the song of Moses and of the Lamb. But why the song of Moses and of the Lamb, but to hint this to us, that the overthrow of Pharaoh was a figure of the overthrow of Satan? And the triumphal song of Moses was a figure of that song which the saints shall sing for their overthrow of Satan. As certainly as Israel overcame Pharaoh, so certainly shall every true Israelite overcome Satan. The Romans were worsted in many fights, but never were overcome in a set war; at the long run they overcame all their enemies. Though a Christian may lie worsted by Satan in some particular skirmishes, yet at the long run he is sure of an honourable conquest. God puts a great deal of honour upon a poor soul when he

brings him into the open field to fight it out with Satan. By fighting, he overcomes, he gains the victory, he triumphs over Satan, and leads captivity captive. Augustine gives this reason why God permitted Adam at first to be tempted, viz. That he might have had the more glory in resisting and withstanding Satan's temptation. It is the glory of a Christian to be made strong to resist, and to have his resistance crowned with a happy conquest.

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

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

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

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

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

[8.] Eighthly and lastly, take many things in one; *God by temptations makes sin more hateful, and the world less delightful, and relations less hurtful.* By temptations God discovers to us our own weakness and the creature's insufficiency in the hour of temptation to help us or succour us. By temptations, God will brighten our Christian armour, and make us stand more upon our

Christian watch, and keep us closer to a succouring Christ. By temptations, the Lord will make his ordinances tube more highly prized, and heaven to be more earnestly desired. Now seeing that temptations shall work so eminently for the saints' good, why should not Christians be mute and silent? why should they not hold their peace, and lay their hands upon their mouths, though their afflictions are attended with great temptations?

Obj. 8. Oh! But God hath deserted me! He hath forsaken me! And 'he that should comfort any soul stands afar off!' How can I be silent? The Lord has hid his face from me; clouds are gathered about me; God hath turned his back upon me; how can I hold my peace?

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

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