

The Mute Christian under the Smarting Rod

Part IV

By [Thomas Brooks](#)

(1.) First, *It hath been the common lot, portion, and condition of the choicest saints in this world, to be deserted and forsaken of God*, Ps. xxx. 6, 7; Ps. lxxvii. 6, and lxxxviii. 6; Job xxiii. 8, 9; Cant. iii. 1-4, v. 6, 7; Isa. viii. 17; Micah vii. 7-9. If God deals no worse with thee than he hath dealt with his most bosom friends, with his choicest jewels, thou hast no reason to complain. But,

(2.) Secondly, *God's forsaking of thee is only partial, it is not total*, Psa. ix. 4; Gen. xlix. 23, 24. God may forsake his people in part, but he never wholly forsakes them; he may forsake them in respect of his quickening presence, and in respect of his comforting presence, but he never forsakes them in respect of his supporting presence; 2 Cor. xii. 9, 'My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness;' Ps. xxxvii. 23, 24, 'The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.' God's supporting hand of grace is still under his people: Ps. lxiii. 8, 'My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me.' Christ has always one hand to uphold his people, and another hand to embrace them, Cant. ii. 16. The everlasting arms of God are always underneath his people, Deut. xxxiii. 27. And this the saints have always found; witness David, Heman, Asaph, Job, &c.

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

(3.) Thirdly, *Though God has forsaken thee, ye his love abides and continues constant to thee; he loves thee with an everlasting love*: Jer. xxxi. 8, 'Where he loves, he loves to the end;' John xiii. 1; Isa. xlix. 14-16, 'But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.' But was not Zion mistaken? yes, 'Can a woman forget her sucking, child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.' Look, as persons engrave the mark, name, or picture of those whom they dearly love and entirely affect, upon some stone that they wear at their breasts, or upon some ring that they wear on their finger, so hath God

engraved Zion upon the palms of his hands; she was still in his eye, and always dear to his heart, though she thought not so. As Joseph's heart was full of love to his brethren, Gen xiii. and xliii., even then when he spoke roughly to them, and withdrew himself from them, for he was fain to go aside and ease his heart by weeping; so the heart of God is full of love to his people, even then when he seems to be most displeased with them, and to turn his back upon them. Though God's dispensations may be changeable towards his people, yet his gracious disposition is unchangeable towards them, Mal. iii. 6. When God puts the blackest veil of all upon his face, yet then his heart is full of love to his people, then his bowels are yearning towards them: Jer. xxxi. 18-20, 'Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.' The mother's bowels cannot more yearn after the tender babe than God doth after his distressed ones. As Moses his mother, when she had put him into the ark of bulrushes, Exod. ii., wept to see the babe weep, and when she was turned from him, she could not but cast a weeping eye of love towards him; so when God turns aside from his people, yet he cannot but cast an eye of love towards them: Hos. xi. 1, 'How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim!' &c. Here are four several 'hows' in the text, the like not to be found in the whole book of God. I am even at a stand, justice calls for vengeance, but mercy interposeth; my bowels year, my heart melts, oh, how shall I give thee up? Oh, I cannot give thee up! I will not give thee up! God's love is always like himself, unchangeable; his love is everlasting; it is a love that never decays nor waxes cold; it is like the stone albestos, of which Solinus writes that being once hot, it can never be cooled again.

(4.) Fourthly, *Though thy Lord hath hid his face from thee, yet certainly thou hast his secret presence with thee.* God is present when he is seemingly absent: 'The Lord was in this place, and I knew it not,' saith Jacob, Gen. xxviii. 16. The sun many times shines when we do not see it, and the husband is many times in the house when the wife does not know it. God [is] in thy house, he is in thy heart, though thou seest him not, thou feelest him not, though thou hearest him not: Heb. xiii. 5, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee;' or, as it may be rendered according to the Greek, 'I will not leave thee, neither will I not forsake thee.' Art thou not now drawn out to prize God and Christ, and his love above all the world? Yes. Art thou not now drawn out to give the Lord many a secret visit, in a corner, behind the door, Cant. ii. 14, in some dark hole where none can see thee nor hear thee but the Lord? Ps. xiii. 1-3, lxiii. 1-3. Yes. Are there not strong breathings, partings, and longings after a clearer vision of God, and after a fuller fruition of God? Yes. Art thou not more affected and afflicted with the withdrawings of Christ than thou art with the greatest afflictions that ever befell thee? Cant. v. 6. Yes. Austin, upon that answer of God to Moses, 'Thou canst not see my face and live,' Exod. xxxiii. 20, makes this quick and sweet reply, 'Then, Lord! let me die, that I may see thy face.' Dost thou not often tell God that there is no punishment to the punishment of loss, and no hell to that of being forsaken of God? Ps. xxx. 6, 7. Yes. Dost thou not find a secret power in thy soul, drawing

thee forth to struggle with God, to lay hold on God, and patiently to wait on God, till he shall return unto thee, and lift up the light of his countenance upon thee? Yes. Well, then, thou mayest be confident that thou hast a secret and blessed presence of God with thee, though God, in regard of his comfortable presence, may be departed from thee. Nothing below a secret presence of God with a man's spirit will keep him waiting and working till the Sun of righteousness shines upon him, Mal. iv. 2. If any vain persons should put that deriding question to thee, Where is thy God? thou mayest safely and boldly answer them, 'My God is here; he is nigh me, he is round about me, yea, he is in the midst of me: Zeph. iii. 17, 'The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty, he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.' The bush, which was a type of the church, consumed not all the while it burned with fire, because God was in the midst of it. It is no argument that Christ is not in the ship, because tempests and storms arise.

(5.) Fifthly, *Though God be gone, yet he will return again.* Though your sun be now set in a cloud, yet it will rise again; though sorrow may abide for a night, yet joy comes in the morning. A Christian's mourning shall last but till morning: Micah vii. 19, 'He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us;' Cant. iii. 4, 'It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth; I held him, and I would not let him go,' &c.; Ps. xciv. 19, 'In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul;' Isa. liv. 7; 8, 10. 'For a moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer; for the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee; neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee.' God will not suffer his whole displeasure to rise upon his people, neither will he forsake them totally or finally. The saints shall taste but some sips of the cup of God's wrath, sinners shall drink the dregs; their storm shall end in a calm, and their winter night shall be turned into a summer day. There was a woman who was thirteen years under desertion, which was so vehement, that for the most part of her time she was fain to keep her bed through weakness. A godly minister, who was affected with her condition, went to comfort her, and to pray with her; but when he came and offered to do it, she shrieked out, utterly refusing and forbidding him to pray with her, for, said she, I have too many abused mercies to answer for already. Yet he would not be put off, but prayed by her, and so prevailed with God on her behalf, that the next morning she was delivered from all her fears, and had such exceeding joy, that the like hath rarely been heard of. The Lord, that had been long withdrawn from her, returned at length in a way of singular mercy to her. There was another precious woman who was several years deserted, and hearing a precious godly minister preach, she of a sudden fell down, overwhelmed with joy, crying out, Oh! he is come whom my soul loveth! and for divers days after she was filled with such exceeding joys, and had such gracious and singular ravishing expressions so fluently coming from her, that many came to hear the rare manifestations of God's grace in her. The

lowest of her pious expressions did exceed the highest that ever the minister had read in the book of martyrs. But,

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

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

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

[3.] Thirdly, *The Lord, by withdrawing from his people, will enhance and raise the price, and commend thy worth, excellency, sweetness, and usefulness of several precious promises, which otherwise would be but as dry breasts, and us useless weapons to the soul,* 2 Peter i. 4. As that Micah vii. 18, 19, 'He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us,' &c.; and that Isa liv. 7, 8, but now opened; and that Heb. xiii. 5, 6; and that Heb. ii. 3; and that Ps. v. 12, 'For thou, Lord wilt bless the righteous; with favour thou wilt compass him,' or crown him, 'as with a shield.'

The Lord will compass the righteous about with his favour, as the crown compasses the head, as the Hebrew imports; and that Ps. cxii. 4, 'Unto the upright there ariseth light in darkness: he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.' And that Jer. xxxi. 37, 'Thus saith the Lord, If heaven above can be measured and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel, for all that they have done, saith the Lord.' As sure as heaven cannot be measured, nor the foundations of the earth searched by the skill or power of any mortal man, so sure and certain it is, that God will not utterly cast off his people, no, not for all the evil that they have done. Now at what a rate doth a deserted soul value these precious promises? Well! saith he, these promises are sweeter than the honey or the honey-comb; they are more precious than gold, than fine gold, than much gold, than all the gold in the world; I prefer them before my food, before my delightful food, yea, before my necessary food, before my appointed portion. As Alexander laid up Homer's Iliad in a cabinet embroidered with gold and pearls; so deserted souls will lay up these precious promises in the cabinet of their hearts, as the choicest treasure the world affords. Dolphins, they say, love music, so do deserted souls the music of the promises. That promise, 1 Tim. i. 15, was music to Bilney the martyr; and that promise, John x. 29, was music to Ursinus; and that promise, Isa lvii. 15, was music to another; and that promise. Isa. xxvi. 3, was music to another; and that to another Mat. xi. 28, &c. Promises that are suited to a deserted man's condition make the sweetest music in his ear, and are the most sovereign cordials to bear up the spirits that God can give, or heaven afford, or the soul desire: Deut. xxxii. 13, 'He made him to ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the fruits of the field; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock.' Ah! the honey, the oil that deserted souls suck of such promises that speak home and close to their conditions!

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

Anaxagoras, seeing himself old and forsaken of the world, laid himself down, and covered his head close, determining to starve himself to death with hunger

[Plutarch]. But, alas! what is it to be forsaken of the world, to a man's being forsaken of God? Were there as many worlds as there be men in the world, a man were better be forsaken by them all than to be forsaken of God. There is a great truth in that saying of Chrysostom, viz., That the torments of a thousand hells, if there were so many, come far short of this one, to wit, to be turned out of God's presence with a *Non novi vos*, I know you not, Mat. vii. 23. The schools have long since concluded, that *poena sensus*, the pain of sense, is far greater than *poena damni*, the pain of loss. What a grief was it to Absalom to see the king's face clouded; and how sadly was Eli and his daughter affected with the loss of the ark, which was but a testimony of God's presence! But oh! how much more is a Christian enacted and afflicted with the loss of the face and favour of God, the remembrance of which makes his heart to melt and his bowels to yearn towards those whose sun is set in a cloud?

[5.] Fifthly, *Hereby the Lord will teach his people to set a higher price upon his face and favour when they come to enjoy it.* Cant. iii. 4, 'It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth; I held him, and I would not let him go,' &c. No man sets so high a price upon Christ, as he that hath lost him and found him again. Jesus in the China tongue signifies the rising sun, and so he is, Mal. iv. 2, especially to souls that have been long clouded. The poor northern nations of Strabo, who want the light of the sun for some months together, when the term of his return approaches, they climb up into the highest mountains to spy it, and he that spies it first was accounted the best and most beloved of God, and usually they did choose him king; at such a rate did they prize the return of the sun. Ah! so it is with a poor soul, that for some months, years, hath been deserted; oh, how highly doth he prize and value the Sun of righteousness his returning to him, and shining upon him! Ps. lxxiii. 3, 'Thy loving-kindness is better than life,' or, 'better than lives,' as the Hebrew hath it [*Chayim*]. Divine favour is better than life; it is better that life with all its revenues, with all its appurtenances, as honours, riches, pleasures, applause, &c., yea, it is better than many lives put together. Now you know at what a high rate men value their lives; they will bleed, sweat, vomit, purge, part with an estate, yea, with a limb; yea limbs. to preserve their lives. As he cried out, Give me any deformity, any torment, any misery, so you spare my life. Now, though life be so dear and precious to a man, yet a deserted soul prizes the returnings of divine favour upon him above life, yea, above many lives. Many men have been weary of their lives, as is evident in Scripture and history; but no man was ever yet found that was weary of the love and favour of God. No man sets so high a price upon the sun as he that hath laid in a dark dungeon, &c. But,

[6.] Sixthly, *Hereby the Lord will train up his servants in that precious life of faith, which is the most honourable and the most happy life in all the world: 2 Cor. v. 7, 'For we walk by faith, and not by sight.'* The life of sense, the life of reason, is a low life, a mean life; the life of faith is a noble life, a blessed life. When Elisha demanded of the Shunamite what he should do for her, whether he should speak for her to the king or the captain of the host, she answered, 'I dwell among my

people,' 2 Kings iv. 13; that is, I dwell nobly and happily among my people; I have no need to make any suit to king or captain; and this she accounts her great happiness, and indeed it is; the greatest happiness in this world to live much in the exercise of faith. No man lives so free a life, so holy a life, so heavenly a life, so happy a life, as he that lives a life of faith. By divine withdrawings the soul is put upon hanging upon a naked God, a naked Christ, a naked promise, Isa. 1. 10; lxiii. 15, 16. Now the soul is put upon the highest and the purest acts of faith, viz., to cleave to God, to hang upon God, and to carry it sweetly and obediently towards God, though he frowns, though he chides, though he strikes, yea, though he kills, Job xiii. 15. Those are the most excellent and heroic acts of faith that are most abstracted from sense and reason; he that suffers his reason to usurp upon his faith, will never be an excellent Christian. He that goes to school to his own reason, hath a fool to his schoolmaster; and he that suffers his faith to be overruled by his reason, shall never want woe. Where reason is strongest, faith usually is weakest. But now the Lord, by forsaking of his people for a time, he makes them skilful in the life of faith, which is the choicest and the sweetest life in this world. But,

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

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

Object. 9. Oh! but I am falsely accused and sadly reproached, and my good name, which should be as dear or dearer to me than my life, is defamed and fly-blown, and things are laid to my charge that I never did, that I never knew, &c.; and how then can I be silent? how can I hold my peace? I cannot forget the proverb, *Oculus et fama non patiuntur jocos*, a man's eye and his good name can bear no jests; and how then can I be mute to see men make jests upon my good

name? and every day to see men lade it with all the scorn and contempt imaginable, that they may utterly blast it? &c. To this I say,

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

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

*Omnia si perdas, famam servare memento,
Qua semel amissa, postea nullus eris.*

Whatsoever commodity you lose, be sure yet to preserve that jewel of a good name. A Christian should be most chary of his good name, for a good name answers to all things, as Solomon spoke of money. *Ergo si bonam famam servasso, sat dives ero,* If I may but keep a good name, I have wealth enough, said the heathen [Plautus]. A Christian should rather forego gold that let go a good name; and he that robs a Christian of his good name is a worse thief than he that robs him of his purse, and better deserves a hanging than he, &c. But,

(2.) Secondly, *It must be granted, that a good name once lost, is very hardly recovered again.* A man may more easily recover a lost friend, a lost estate, than a lost name. A good name is like a princely structure, quickly ruined, but long a-rearing. The father of the prodigal could say of his lost son, 'This my son was lost, but is found; he was dead, but is alive,' Luke xv. 32; but how few Christians can say, This my good name was lost, but is found; it was dead, but now it lives.

As when Orpah once left Naomi, she returned no more to her, Ruth i. 14; so when once a good name leaves a man, it hardly returns to him again. A cracked credit will hardly be soldered anew, new wine is rarely put into old bottles. A man should stand upon nothing more than the credit of his conscience and the credit of his name.

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

(3.) Thirdly, *Though all this be true, yet it has been the portion of God's dearest saints and servants to be slandered, reproached, vilified, and falsely accused: Ps xxxi. 18, 'Let the lying lips be put to silence, which speak grievous things proudly, and contemptuously against the righteous.'* How sadly and falsely was Joseph accused by his wanton mistress; David by Doeg and Shimei; Job of hypocrisy, impiety, inhumanity, cruelty, partiality, pride, and irreligion! Was not Naboth accused of speaking blasphemy against God and the king? Did not Haman present the Jews to the king as refractories and refuels? Esther iii. Was not Elias accused to be the troubler of Israel, and Jeremiah the trumpet of rebellion; the Baptist a stirrer up of sedition, and Paul a pestilent incendiary? Were not the apostles generally accounted deceivers and deluders of the people, and the offscouring of the world? &c. Athanasius and Eustathius were falsely accused of adultery. Heresy and treason were charged upon Cranmer, parricide upon Philpot, sedition upon Latimer. As the primitive persecutors usually put Christians into bears' skins and dogs' skins, and then baited them; so they usually loaded their names and persons with all the reproach, scorn, contempt, and false reports imaginable, and then baited them, and then acted all their malice and cruelty upon them. I think there is no Christian, but sooner or later, first or last, will have cause to say with David, Ps. xxxv. 11, 'False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not;' they charged me with such things whereof I was both innocent and ignorant. It was the saying of one [Hippias], that there was nothing so intolerable as accusation, because there was no punishment ordained by law for accusers, as there was for thieves, although they stole friendship from men, which is the goodliest riches men can have. Well! Christians, seeing it hath been the lot of the dearest saints to be falsely accused, and to have their names and reputes in the world reproached and fly-blown, do you hold your peace, seeing it is no worse with you than it was with them, 'of whom this world was not worthy.' The Rabbis say [Kimchi], that the world cannot subsist without patient bearing of reproaches. But,

(4.) Fourthly, *Our Lord Jesus Christ was sadly reproached and falsely accused.* His precious name, that deserves to be always writ in characters of gold, as the

Persians usually writ their king's, was often eclipsed before the sun was eclipsed at his death. His sweet name, that was sweeter than all sweets, was often crucified before his body. Oh, the stones of reproach that were frequently rolled upon that name by which we must be saved, if ever we are saved! Oh, the jeers, the scoffs, the scorns that were cast upon that name that can only bless us! The name of Jesus, saith Chrysostom, hath a thousand treasures of joy and comfort in it. The name of a Saviour, saith Bernard, is honey in the mouth, and music in the ear, and a jubilee in the heart; and yet where is the heart that can conceive, or the tongue that can express, how much dung and filth hath been cast upon Christ's name; and how many sharp arrows of reproach and scorn hath been, and daily, yea, hourly, are, shot by the world at Christ's name and honour? Such ignominious reproaches were cast upon Christ and his name in the time of his life and at his death, that the sun did blush, and masked himself with a cloud, that he might no longer behold them. Mat. xi. 19, 'The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.' But was he such an one? No: 'Wisdom is justified of her children.' Wisdom's children will stand up and justify her before all the world. Mat. xxvii. 63, 'Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days, I will rise again.' But was he a deceiver of the people? No, he was the faithful and true witness, Rev. i. 5, chap. iii. 14. John vii. 20, 'The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil, who goeth about to kill thee?' chap. viii. 48, 'Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well, that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?' chap. x. 20, 'And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?' It was a wonder of wonders that the earth did not open and swallow up these monsters, and that God did not rain hell out of heaven upon these horrid blasphemers; but their blasphemous assertions were denied and disproved by some of wisdom's children: ver. 21, 'Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil: can a devil open the eyes of the blind?' The devil hath no such power, nor any such goodness, as to create eyes to him that was born blind.

Will you yet see more scorn, dirt, and contempt cast upon the Lord of glory? Why, then, cast your eyes upon that: Luke xvi. 14, 'And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things, and they derided him;' or as the Greek reads it, 'They blew their noses at him in scorn and derision.' The Pharisees did not only laugh, fleer, and jeer at Christ, but they have also external signs of scorn and derision in their countenance and gestures; they blew their noses at him, they contemned him as a thing of nought. And in chap. xxv. 35, both people and rulers blew their noses at him; for the original word is the same with that in the fore-mentioned chapter. John xix. 12, he is accused for being an enemy to Caesar. Now, who can seriously consider of the scorn, reproach, and contempt that hath been cast upon the name and honour of our Lord Jesus, and not sit silent and mute under all the scorn and contempt that hath been cast upon his name or person in this world?

(5.) Fifthly, *To be well spoken of by them that are ill spoken of by God, to be in*

favour with them who are out of favour with God, is rather a reproach than a honour to a man. Our Saviour himself testifies that in the church and nation of the Jews, they that had the most general approbation and applause, they who were most admired and cried up, were the worst, not the best, men; they were the false not the true, prophets: Luke vi. 26, 'Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets.' Austin feared the praises of good men, and detested the praises of evil men. I would not, saith Luther, have the glory and fame of Erasmus; my greatest fear is the praises of men. Phocion had not suspected his speech had not the common people applauded it. Antisthenes mistrusted some ill in himself for the vulgar commendations. Socrates ever suspected that which passed with the most general commendations. To be praised of evil men, said Bion, is to be praised for evil doing; for the better they speak of a man the worse, and the worse the better. The Lacedaemonians would not have a good saying sullied with a wicked mouth. A wicked tongue soils all the good that drops into it. It is a mercy to be delivered from the praises of wicked men; wicked men's applauses oftentimes become the saints' reproaches. The heathen [Socrates] could say, *Quid mali feci?* what evil have I done, that this bad man commends me. There is a truth in that saying of Seneca, *Recti argumentum est, pessimis displicere*, the worst men are commonly most displeased with that which is best. Who can seriously dwell on these things, and not be mute and silent under all the reproaches and scorn that is cast upon his name and credit in this world?

(6.) Sixthly, *There will come a day when the Lord will wipe off all the dust and filth that wicked men have cast upon the good names of his people* There shall be a resurrection of names as well as of bodies; their names that are now buried in the open sepulchre of evil throats shall surely rise again. Their innocence shall shine forth as the light, and their righteousness as the noon-day', Ps. xxxvii. 6;. Though the clouds may for a time obscure the shining forth of the sun, yet the sun will shine forth again as bright and glorious as ever: 'The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance,' Ps. cxii. 6. Though the malicious slanders and false accusations of wicked men may for a time cloud the names of the saints, yet those clouds shall vanish, and their names shall appear transparent and glorious. God will take that care of his people's good name, that the infamy, calumnies, and contumelies that are cast upon it shall not long stick. The Jews rolled a stone upon Christ to keep him down, that he might not rise again, but an angel quickly rolls away the stone, and in despite of his keepers, he rises in a glorious triumphant manner, Mat. xxviii. 2. So though the world may roll this stone and that of reproach and contempt upon the saints' good names, yet God will roll away all those stones; and their names shall have a glorious resurrection in despite of men and devils. That God that hath always one hand to wipe away his children's tears from their eyes, that God hath always another hand to wipe off the dust that lies upon his children's names. Wronged innocence shall not long lie under a cloud. Dirt will not stick long upon marble nor statues of gold. Well! Christians, remember this, the slanders and reproaches that are cast upon you, they are but badges of your innocence and glory: Job xxxi. 35, 36, 'If mine

adversary should write a book against me: surely I would take it upon my shoulder, and bind it as a crown to me.' All reproaches are pearls added to a Christian's crown. Hence Austin, *Quisquis volens detrahit famae meae, nolens addit mercedi meae*, he that willingly takes from me my good name, unwillingly adds to my reward; and this Moses knew well enough, which made him prefer Christ's reproach before Pharaoh's crown, Heb. xi. 25, 26. That God that knows all his children by name will not suffer their names to be long buried under the ashes of reproach and scorn; and therefore hold thy peace. The more the foot of pride and scorn tramples upon thy name for the present, the more splendid and radiant it will be, as the more men trample upon a figure graven in gold, the more lustrous they make it. Therefore lay thy hand upon thy mouth. But,

(7.) Seventhly, *The Lord hath been a swift anti a terrible witness against such that have falsely accused his children, and that have laded their names with scorn, reproach, and contempt*, Isa. xli. 2; Jude 15. Ahab and Jezebel, that suborned false witness against Naboth, had their bloods licked up by dogs, 1 Kings xxii. 21, 22; 2 Kings ix. 30. Amaziah, who falsely accused the prophet Amos to the king, met with this message from the Lord: 'Thy wife shall be an harlot in the city, thy sons and daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; thou shalt die in a polluted land,' Amos vii. : 17. Haman, who falsely accused the Jews, was one day feasted with the king, and the next day made a feast for crows, Esth. vii. 10, ix. 10. The envious courtiers, who falsely accused Daniel, were devoured of lions, Dan. vi. 24. Let me give you a taste of the judgments of God upon such persons out of histories.

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

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

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

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

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

(8.) Eighthly, and lastly, *God himself is daily reproached*. Men tremble not to cast scorn and contempt upon God himself. Sometimes they charge the Lord that his ways are not equal, that it is a wryly way he goes in, Ezek. xviii. 25, Jer. ii. 5, 6; sometimes they charge God with cruelty, 'My punishment is greater than I am able to bear,' Gen. iv. 13; sometimes they charge God with partiality and respect off persons, because here he strokes, and there he strikes; here he lifts up and there he casts down; here he smiles, and there he frowns; here he gives much, and there he gives nothing; here he loves, and there he hates; here he prospers one, and there he blasts another: Mal. ii. 17 'Where is the God of judgment' i.e. nowhere; either there is no God of judgment, or at least not a God of exact, precise, and impartial judgment, &c. Sometimes they charge God with unbountifulness; that he is a God that will set his people too hard work, too much work, but will pay them no wages, nor give them no reward: Mal. iii. 14, 'Ye have said, it is in vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?' Sometimes they charge God that he is a hard master and that he reaps where he has not sown, and gathers where he has not strewed, Mat. xxv. 24, &c. Oh! the infinite reproach and scorn that is every day, that is every hour in the day, cast upon the Lord, his name, his truth, his ways, his ordinances, his glory! Alas! all the scorn and contempt that is cast upon all the saints all the world over, is nothing to that which is cast upon the great God every hour; and yet he is patient. Ah! how hardly do most men think of God, and how hardly do they speak of God, and how unhandsomely do they carry it towards God; and yet he bears. They that will not spare God himself, his name, his truth, his honour; shall we think it much that they spare not us or our names? &c. Surely no. Why should we look that those should give us good words that cannot afford God a good word from one week's end to another? yea, from one year's end to another? Why should we look that they should cry out 'Hosanna, hosanna!' to us when as every day they cry out of Christ, 'Crucify him, crucify him!' Mat. x. 25, 'It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord; if they have called the master of the house Beelzebub' (or a master-fly, or a dunghill god, or the chief devil), 'how much more shall they call them of his household!' It is preferment enough for the servant to be as his Lord; and if they make no bones of staining and blaspheming the name of the Lord, never wonder if they fly-blow thy name. And let this suffice to quiet and silence your hearts, Christians, under all that

scorn and contempt that is cast upon your names and reputations in this world.

The tenth and last objection is this,

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

(1.) First, *The Lord does not always time his answers to the swiftness of his people's expectations.* He that is the God of our mercies, is the Lord of our times. God hath delayed long his dearest saints, times belonging to him, as well as issue: Hab. i. 2, 'O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee for violence, and thou wilt not help,' Job xix. 7, 'Behold, I cry out of violence, but I have no answer; I cry, but there is no judgment.' Ps. xix. 3, 'I am weary of crying, my throat is dry, mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.' Ps. xl. 17, 'Make no tarrying, O my God.' Though God had promised him a crown, a kingdom, yet he puts him off from day to day, and for all his haste he must stay for it till the set time is come. Paul was delayed so long, till he even despaired of life, and had the sentence of death in himself, 2 Cor. i. 8, 9. And Joseph was delayed so long, till the irons entered into his soul, Ps. cv. 17-19. So he delayed long the giving in of comfort to Mr Glover, though he had sought him frequently, earnestly, and denied himself to the death for Christ. Augustine being under convictions, a shower of tears came from him, and casting himself on the ground under a fig tree, he cries out, 'O Lord, how long?' How long shall I say, Tomorrow, tomorrow? why not today, Lord, why not today? Though Abigail made haste to present David's fury, and Rahab made haste to hang out her scarlet thread; yet God doth not always make haste to hear and save his dearest children. And therefore hold thy peace. He deals no worse with thee than he hath done by his dearest jewels.

(2.) Secondly, *Though the Lord doth defer and delay you for a time, yet he will come, and mercy and deliverance shall certainly come.* He will not always forget the cry of the poor: Heb. x. 37, 'For yet a little, little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.' Hab. ii. 3, 'The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it.' God will come, and mercy will come; though for the present thy sun be set, and thy God seems to neglect thee, yet thy sun will rise again, and thy God will answer all thy prayers, and supply all thy necessities: Ps. lxxi. 20, 21, 'Thou which hast shewed me great and sore troubles shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth. Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.' Three martyrs being brought to the stake, and all bound, one of them slips from under his chain, to admiration, and falls down upon the ground, and wrestled earnestly with God for the sense of his love, and God gave it in to him then, and so he came and embraced the stake, and died cheerfully a

glorious martyr. God delays him till he was at the stake, and till he was bound, and then sweetly lets out himself to him.

(3.) Thirdly, *Though God do delay thee, yet he doth not forget thee.* He remembers thee still; thou art still in his eye, Isa. xlix. 14-16, and always upon his heart, Jer. xxxi. 20. He can as soon forget himself, as forget his people, Ps. lxxvii. 9, 10. The bride shall sooner forget her ornaments, and the mother shall sooner forget her sucking child, Isa. liv. 7-10, and the wife shall sooner forget her husband, Isa. lxii. 3-5 than the Lord shall forget his people. Though Sabinus in Seneca could never in all his lifetime remember those three names of Homer, Ulysses, and Achilles, yet God always knows and remembers his people by name, Gen. viii. 1; xix. 29-31; 1 Sam. i. 9; Jonah iv. 9-11, &c. Therefore be silent, hold thy peace; thy God hath not forgotten thee though for the present he hath delayed thee.

(4.) Fourthly, *God's time is always the best time: God always takes the best and fittest seasons to do us good.* Isa. xlix. 8, 'Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee.' I could have heard thee before, and have helped thee before, but I have taken the most acceptable time to do both. To set God his time is to limit him, Ps. lxxviii. 41; it is to exalt ourselves above him, as if we were wiser than God. Though we are not wise enough to improve the times and seasons which God hath set us, to serve and honour him in, yet we are apt to think that we are wise enough to set God his time, when to hear, and when to save, and when to deliver. To circumscribe God to our time, and to make ourselves lords of time; what is this but to divest God of his royalty and sovereignty of appointing times? Acts i. 7, xvii. 26. It is but just and equal, that that God that hath made time, and that hath the sole power to appoint and dispose of time, that he should take his own time to do his people good. We are many times humorous, preposterous, and hasty, and now we must have mercy or we die, deliverance or we are undone; but our impatience will never help us to a mercy, one hour, one moment, before the time that God hath set. The best God will always take the best time to hand out mercies to his people. There is no mercy so fair, so ripe, so lovely, so beautiful, as that which God gives out in his own time. Therefore hold thy peace; though God delays thee, yet be silent, for there is no possibility of wringing a mercy out of God's hand, till the mercy be ripe for us; and we ripe for the mercy, Eccles. iii. 11.

[6.] Fifthly, *The Lord in this life will certainty recompense, and make his children amends for all the delays and put-offs that he exercises them with in this world,* as he did Abraham in giving him such a son as Isaac was and Hannah in giving her a Samuel. He delayed Joseph long, but at length he changes his iron fetters into chains of gold, his rags into royal robes, his stocks into a chariot, his prison into a palace, his bed of thorns into a bed of down, his reproach into honour, and his thirty years of suffering into eighty years reigning in much grandeur and glory. So God delayed David long, but when his suffering hours were out, he is anointed, and the crown of Israel is set upon his head, and he is made very

victorious, very famous and glorious for forty years together, 2 Sam. i. Well! Christians, God will certainly pay you interest upon interest for all the delays that you meet with; and therefore hold your peace. But,

[6.] Sixthly and lastly, *The Lord never delays the giving in of this mercy, or that deliverance, or the other favour, but upon great and weighty reason; and therefore hold thy peace.*

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

Ans. [1.] First, *for the trial of his people, and for the differencing and distinguishing of them from others.* As the furnace tries gold, so delays will try what metal a Christian is made of. Delays will try both the truth and the strength of a Christian's graces. Delays are a Christian touchstone, a *lapis Ludius*, that will try what metal men are made of, whether they be gold or dross, silver or tin, whether they lie sincere or unsound, whether they be real or rotten Christians. As a father, by crossing and delaying his children, tries their disposition and makes a full discovery of them, so that he can say, that child is of a muttering and grumbling disposition, and that it is of an humorous and wayward disposition, but the rest are of a meek sweet, humble, anal gentle disposition: so the Lord, by the delaying and crossing of his children, discovers their different dispositions. The manner of the Psylli, which are a kind of people of that temper and constitution that no venom will hurt them, is, that if they suspect any child to be none of their own, they set an adder upon it to sting it, and if it cry, and the flesh swell, they cast it away as a spurious issue, but if it do not cry, if it do not so much as quatch, nor do not grow the worse for it, then they account it for their own, and make very much of it; so the Lord by delays, which are as the stinging of the adder, tries his children; if they patiently, quietly, and sweetly can bear them, then the Lord still own them, and make much of them, as those that are near and dear unto him; but if under delays they fall a-crying, roaring, storming, vexing, and fretting, the Lord will not own them, but reckon them as bastards, and no sons, Heb. xii. 8.

[2.] Secondly, *That they may have the greater experience of his power, grace, love, and mercy in the close.* Christ loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus, yet he defers his coming for several days, and Lazarus must die, be put in the grave, and lie there till he stinks. And why so, but that they might have the greater experience of his power, grace, and love towards them? John xi. 3, 5, 6, 17.

[3.] Thirdly, *To sharpen his children's appetite, and to put a greater edge upon their desires; to make them cry out as a woman in travail, or as a man that is in danger of drowning, Cant. iii. 1-4; Isa. xxvi. 8, 9, 16.* God delays, that his people may set upon him with greater strength and importunity; he puts them off, that they may put on with more life and vigour; God seems to be cold, that he may

make us the more hot; he seems to lie slack, that he may make us the more earnest; he seems to be backward, that he may make us the more forward in pressing upon him. The father delays the child, that he may make him the more eager, and so doth God his, that he may make them the more divinely violent. When Balaam had once put off Balak, 'he sent again,' saith the text, 'certain princes more, and more honourable than they', Num. xxii. 15. Balaam's put-offs did but make Balak the more importunate, it did but increase and whet his desires. This is that that God aims at by all his put-offs, to make his children more earnest, to whet up their spirits, and that they may send up more and yet more honourable prayers after him, that they may cry more earnestly, strive more mightily, and wrestle more importunately with God, and that they may take heaven with a more sacred violence. Anglers draw back the hook, that the fish may be the more forward to bite; and God sometimes seems to draw back, but it is only that we may press the more on. And therefore, as anglers, when they have long waited, and perceive that the fish do not so much as nibble at the bait, yet do they not impatiently throw away the rod, or break the hook and line, but pull up, and look upon the bait and mend it, and so throw it in again, and then the fish bites: so when a Christian prays, and prays, and yet catches nothing, God seems to be silent, and heaven seems to be shut against him; yet let him not cast off prayer, but mend his prayer; pray more believingly, pray more affectionately, and pray more fervently, and then the fish will bite, then mercy will come, and comfort will come, and deliverance will come. But,

[4.] Fourthly, *God delays and puts off his people many times, that he may make a fuller discovery of themselves to themselves.* Few Christians see themselves and understand themselves. By delays God discovers much of a man's sinful self to his religious self; much of his worsen part to his better part, of his ignoble part to his most noble part. When the fire is put under the pot, then the scum appears; so when God delays a poor soul, Oh! how doth the scum of pride, the scum of murmuring, the scum of quarrelling, the scum of distrust, the scum of impatience, the scum of despair, discover itself in the heart of a poor creature? Ezek. xxiv. 6. I have read of a fool, who being left in a chamber, and the door locked when he was asleep; after he awakes, and finds the door fast and all the people gone, he cries out at the window, O myself, myself, O myself! So when God shuts the door upon his people, when he delays them, and puts them off, Ah! what cause have they to cry out of themselves, to cry out of proud self, and worldly self, and carnal self, and foolish self, and froward self, &.? We are very apt, says Seneca, *utimur perspicillis magis quam speculis*, to use spectacles to behold other men's faults, rather than looking-glasses to behold our own; but now God's delays are as a looking-glass, in which God gives his people to see their own faults, Ps. lxxiii. 11, 12. Oh! that looseness, that vileness, that wretchedness, that sink of filthiness, that gulf of wickedness, that God by delays discovers to be in the hearts of men! But,

[5.] Fifthly, *God delays and puts off his people to enhance, to raise the price of mercy, the price of deliverance.* We usually set the highest price, the greatest

esteem upon such things that we obtain with greatest difficulty. What we dearly buy, that we highly prize, Acts xxi. 8, Cant. iii. 1. The more sighs, tears, weepings, wailings, watchings, strivings, and earnest longings, this mercy and that deliverance, and the other favour casts us, the more highly we shall value them. When a delayed mercy comes, it tastes more like a mercy, it sticks more like a mercy, it warms more like a mercy, works more like a mercy, and it endears the heart to God more like a mercy than any other mercy that a man enjoys. This is the child, said Hannah,—after God had long delayed her,—for which I prayed, and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him, 1 Sam. i. 27. Delayed mercy is the cream of mercy; no mercy so sweet, so dear, so precious to a man, as that which a man hath gained after many put-offs. Mr Glover, the martyr, sought the Lord earnestly and frequently for some special mercies, and the Lord delayed him long; but when he was even at the stake, then the Lord gave in the mercies to him; and then, as a man overjoyed, he cries out to his friend, He is come, he is come.' But,

[6] Sixthly, *The Lord delays his people, that he may pay them home in his own coin.* God sometimes loves to retaliate, Prov. i. 23, 33. 'The spouse puts off Christ: Cant. v. 3, 'I have put off my coat, how eat I put it on?' &c.; and Christ puts her off; ver. 5-8. Thou hast put off God from day to flay, from month to month, yea, from year to year; and therefore, if God put thee off from day to day, or from year to year, hast thou any cause to complain? Surely no. Thou hast often and long put off the motions of his Spirit, the directions of his word, the offers of his grace, the entreaties of his Son; and therefore what can be more just than that God should delay thee for a time, and put thee off for a season, who hast delayed him, and put off him days without number? If God serves thee as thou hast often served him, thou hast no reason to complain. But,

[7.] Seventhly, and lastly, *The Lord delays his people, that heaven may be the more sweet to them at last.* Here they meet with many delays and with many put-offs; but in heaven they shall never meet with one put-off, with one delay; here many times they call and cry, and can get no answer; here they knock; and bounce, and yet the door of grace and mercy opens not to them; but in heaven they shall have mercy at the first word, at the first knock. There, whatever heart can wish shall without delay be enjoined. Here God seems to say sometimes, Souls! you have mistaken the door, or I am not at leisure, or others must be served before you, or come some other time, &c. But in heaven God is always at leisure, and all the sweetness and blessedness and happiness of that state presents itself every hour to the soul. There God hath never, God will never, say to any of his saints in heaven, Come tomorrow. Such language the saints sometimes hear here, but such language is no way suitable to a glorified condition; and therefore, seeing that the Lord never delays his people, but upon great and weighty accounts, let his people be silent before him, let them not mutter nor murmur, but be minute. And so I have done with the objections.

I shall come now in the last place to propound some helps and directions that

may contribute to the silencing and stilling of your souls under the greatest afflictions, the sharpest trials, and the saddest providences that you meet with in this world; and so close up this discourse.

(1.) First, *All the afflictions that come upon the saints, they are the fruits of divine love:* Rev. iii. 19, 'As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent;' Heb. xii. 6, 'For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth;' Job v. 17, 'Behold! happy is the man whom God correcteth; therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty;' chap. vii. 17, 18, 'What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him? And that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?' Isa. xlvi. 10 'Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.' When Munster lay sick, and his friends asked him how he did, and how he felt himself, he pointed to his sores and ulcers, whereof he was full, and said, These are God's gems and jewels wherewith he decketh his best friends, and to me they are more precious than all the gold and silver in the world. A gentleman highly prizes his hawk, he feeds her with his own hand, he carries her upon his fist, he takes a great deal of delight and pleasure in her; and therefore he puts vervels upon her legs, and a hood upon her head; he hoodwinks her, and fetters her, because he loves her, and takes delight in her; so the Lord by afflictions hoodwinks and fetters his children, but all is because he loves them, and takes delight and pleasure in them. There cannot be a greater evidence of God's hatred and wrath, than his refusing to correct men for their sinful courses and vanities. 'Why should you be smitten any more? you will revolt more and more,' Isa. i. 5. Where God refuses to correct, there God resolves to destroy; there is no man so near the axe, so near the flames, so near hell, as he whom God will not so much as spend a rod upon. God is most angry where he shews no anger. Jerome, writing to a sick friend, hath this expression, I account it a part of unhappiness not to know adversity; I judge you to be miserable, because you have not been miserable. Nothing, saith another [Demetrius], seems more unhappy to me, than he to whom no adversity hath happened. God afflicts thee, O Christian, in love; and therefore Luther cries out, Strike, Lord; strike, Lord, and spare not. Who can seriously muse upon this, and not hold his peace, and not be silent under the most smarting rod?

(2.) Secondly, *Consider, that the trials and troubles, the calamities and miseries, the crosses and losses that you meet with in this world, is all the hell that ever you shall have.* Here you have your hell; hereafter you shall have your heaven. This is the worst of your condition; the best is to come. Lazarus had his hell first, his heaven last; but Dives had his heaven first, and his hell at last, Luke xvi. 24-31. Thou hast all thy pangs, and pains, and throes here that ever thou shalt have; thy ease, and rest, and pleasure is to come. Here you have all your bitter, your sweet is to come; here you have your sorrows, your joys are to come; here you have all your winter nights, your summer days are to come; here you have your passion-week, your ascension-day is to come; here you have your evil things, your good things are to come. Death will put a period to all thy sins, and to all thy

sufferings; and it will be an inlet to those joys, delights, and contents that shall never have end; and therefore hold thy peace, and be silent before the Lord.

(3.) Thirdly, *Get an assurance that Christ is yours, and pardon of sin yours, and divine favour yours, and heaven yours; and the sense of this will exceedingly quiet and silence the soul under the sorest and sharpest trials a Christian can meet with in this world.* He that is assured that God is his portion, will never mutter nor murmur under his greatest burden; he that can groundedly say, 'Nothing shall separate me from the love of God in Christ,' he will be able to triumph in the midst of the greatest tribulations, Rom. viii. 33-39; he that with the spouse can say, 'My beloved is mine, and I am his,' Cant. ii. 16 will bear up quietly and sweetly under the heaviest afflictions. In the time of the Marian persecution there was a gracious woman, who being convened before bloody Bonner, then bishop of London, upon the trial of religion, he threatened her that he would take away her husband from her. Saith she, Christ is my husband. I will take away thy child. Christ, saith she, is better to me than ten sons. I will strip thee, saith he, of all thy outward comforts. Yea, but Christ is mine, saith she, and you cannot strip me of him. Oh! the assurance that Christ was hers bore up her heart, and quieted her spirit under all. You may take away my life, saith Basil, but you cannot take away my comfort; my head, but not my crown. Yea, quoth he, had I a thousand lives, I would lay them all down for my Saviour's sake, who hath done abundantly more for me. John Ardley professed to Bonner, when he told him of burning, and how ill he could endure it, that if he had as many lives as he had hairs on his head, he would lose them all in the fire before he would lose his Christ. Assurance will keep a man from muttering and murmuring under the sorest afflictions. Henry and John, two Augustine monks, being the first that were burnt in Germany, and Mr Rogers, the first that was burnt in Queen Mary's days, did all sing in the flame. A soul that lives in the assurance of divine favour, and in its title to glory, cannot but bear up patiently and quietly under the greatest sufferings that possibly can befall it in this world. That scripture is worth its weight in gold, 'The inhabitants of Sion shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity,' Isa. xxxiii. 24. He doth not say, they were not sick. No. But though they were sick, yet they should not say, they were sick. But why should they forget their sorrows, and not remember their pains, nor be sensible of their sickness? Why! the reason is, because the Lord had forgiven them their iniquities. The sense of pardon took away the sense of pain; the sense of forgiveness took away the sense of sickness. Assurance of pardon will take away the pain, the sting, the trouble of every trouble and affliction that a Christian meets with. No affliction will daunt, startle, or stagger an assured Christian. An assured Christian will be patient and silent under all, Ps. xxiii. 1, 4-7. Melanchthon makes mention of a godly woman, who, having upon her deathbed been in much conflict, and afterward much comforted, brake out into these words: Now, and not till now, I understand the meaning of these words, 'Thy sins are forgiven;' the sense of which did mightily cheer and quiet her. He that hath got this jewel of assurance in his bosom, will be far enough off from vexing or fretting under the saddest dispensations that he meets with in this world.

(4.) Fourthly, If you would be quiet and silent under your present troubles and trials, *then dwell much upon the benefit, the profit, the advantage that has redounded to your souls by former troubles and afflictions that have been upon you.* Eccles. vii. 14, 'In the day of adversity consider.' Oh! now consider, how by former afflictions the Lord hath discovered sin, prevented sin, and mortified sin: consider how the Lord by former afflictions has discovered to thee the impotency, the mutability, the insufficiency, and the vanity of the world, and all worldly concernments: consider how the Lord by former afflictions hath melted thy heart, and broken thy heart, and humbled thy heart, and prepared thy heart for clearer, fuller, and sweeter enjoyments of himself: consider what pity, what compassion, what bowels, what tenderness, and what sweetness former afflictions have wrought in thee towards others in misery: consider what room former afflictions have made in thy soul for God, for his word, for good counsel, and for divine comfort: consider how by former afflictions the Lord hath made thee more partaker of his Christ, his Spirit, his holiness, his goodness, &c.: consider how by former afflictions the Lord hath made thee to look towards heaven more, to mind heaven more, to prize heaven more, and to long for heaven more, &c. Now, who can seriously consider of all that good that he hath got by former afflictions, and not be silent under present afflictions? Who can remember those choice, those great, and those precious earnings that his soul hath made of former afflictions, and not reason himself into a holy silence under present afflictions thus: O my soul! hath not God done thee much good, great good, special good by former afflictions? Yes. O my soul! hath not God done that for thee by former afflictions, that thou wouldst not have to do for ten thousand worlds? Yes. And is not God, O my soul! as powerful as ever, as faithful as ever, as gracious as ever, and as ready and willing as ever to do thee good by present afflictions, as he hath been to do thee good by former afflictions? Yes, yes. Why, why then dost thou not sit silent and mute before him under thy present troubles! O my soul! It was the saying of one, that an excellent memory was needful for three sorts of men: First, for tradesmen; for they, having many businesses to do, many reckonings to make up, many irons in the fire, had need of a good memory. Secondly, great talkers; for they, being full of words, had need to have a good storehouse in their heads to feed their tongues. Thirdly, for liars; for they telling many untruths, had need of a good memory, lest they should be taken in their lying contradictions: and I may add for a fourth, viz., those that are afflicted, that they may remember the great good that they have gained by former afflictions, that so they may be the more silent and quiet under present troubles.

(5.) Fifthly, To quiet and silence your souls under the sorest afflictions and sharpest trials, consider, that *your choicest, your chiefest treasure is safe; your God is safe, your Christ is safe, your portion is safe, your crown is safe, your inheritance is safe, your royal palace is safe, and your jewels, your graces are safe; therefore hold your peace,* 2 Tim. i. 12; iv. 8.

I have read a story of a man that had a suit, and when his cause was to be

heard, he applied himself to three friends, to see what they could do for him: one answered, he would bring him as far on his journey as he could; the second promised him that he would go with him to his journey's end; the third engaged himself to go with him before the judge, and to speak for him, and not to leave him till his cause was heard and determined. These three are a man's riches, his friends, and his graces. His riches will help him to comfortable accommodations while they stay with him, but they often take leave of a man before his soul takes leave of his body. His friends will go with him to his grave, and then leave him; but his graces will accompany him before God, they will not leave him nor forsake him; they will go to the grave, to glory, with him, 1 Tim. vi 18, 19.

In that famous battle at Leuctrum, where the Thebans got a signal victory, but their captain, Epaminondas, a little before his death, demanded whether his buckler were taken by the enemy, and when he understood that it was safe, and that they had not so much as laid their hands on it, he died most willingly, cheerfully, and quietly. Well! Christians, your shield of faith is safe, your portion is safe, your royal robe is safe, your kingdom is safe, your heaven is safe, your happiness and blessedness is safe; and therefore under all your afflictions and troubles, in patience possess your own souls. But,

(6.) Sixthly, If you would be silent and quiet under your sorest troubles and trials, then *set yourselves in good earnest upon the mortification of your lusts*. It is unmortified lust which is the sting of every trouble, and which makes every sweet bitter, and every bitter more bitter. Sin unmortified adds weight to every burden, it puts gall to our wormwood, it adds chain to chain: it makes the bed uneasy, the chamber a prison, relaxations troublesome, and everything vexatious to the soul. James iv. 1, 'From whence come wars and fightings amongst you? come they not hence, even of your lusts, that war in your members?' So say I from whence counts all this muttering, murmuring, fretting, and vexing, &c., come they not hence, even from your unmortified lusts? Come they not from your unmortified pride, and unmortified self-love, and unmortified unbelief, and unmortified passion, &c.? Surely they do. Oh, therefore, as ever you would be silent under the afflicting hand of God, labour for more and more of the grace of the Spirit, by which you may mortify the lusts of the flesh, Rom. viii. 13. It is not your strongest resolutions or purposes, without the grace of the Spirit, that can overmaster a lust. A soul-sore, till it be indeed healed, will run, though we resolve and say it shall not be. It was the blood of the sacrifice, and the oil, that cleansed the leper in the law; and that by them was meant the blood of Christ and the grace of his Spirit, is agreed on all hands, Lev. xiv. 14-16. It was a touch of Christ's garment that cured the wonton of her bloody issue, Mark v. 25, *et seq.* Philosophy, saith Lactantius, may hide a sin, but it cannot quench it; it may cover a sin, but it cannot cut off a sin. Like a black patch instead of a plaster, it may cover some deformities in nature, but it cures them not; neither is it the papists' purgatories, watchings, whippings, &c., nor St Francis his kissing or licking of lepers' sores, which will cleanse the fretting leprosy of sin. In the strength of Christ, and in the power of the Spirit, set roundly upon the mortifying of every lust. Oh, hug none,

indulge none, but resolutely set upon the ruin of all! One leak in a ship will sink it; one wound strikes Goliath dead as well as three-and-twenty did Caesar; one Delilah may do Samson as much spite and mischief as all the Philistines; one broken wheel spoils all the whole clock; one vein bleeding will let out all the vitals as well as more; one fly will spoil a whole box of ointment; one bitter herb all the pottage. By eating one apple Adam lost paradise, one lick of honey endangered Jonathan's life, one Achan was a trouble to all Israel, one Jonah raises a storm and becomes lading too heavy for a whole ship; so one unmortified lust will be able to raise very strange and strong storms and tempests in the soul in the days of affliction. And therefore, as you would have a blessed calm and quietness in your own spirits under your sharpest trials, set thoroughly upon the work of mortification. Gideon had seventy sons, and but one bastard, yet that bastard destroyed all his seventy sons, Judges viii. 30, 31, chap. ix. 1, 2. Ah, Christian! dost thou not know what a world of mischief one unmortified lust may do? and therefore let nothing satisfy thee but the blood of all thy lusts.

(7.) Seventhly, If you would be silent under your greatest afflictions, your sharpest trials, then make this consideration your daily companion, viz., *That all the afflictions that come upon you, come upon you by and through that covenant of grace that God has made with you.* In the covenant of grace, God has engaged himself to keep you from the evils, snares, and temptations of the world; in the covenant of grace, God hath engaged himself to purge away your sins, to brighten and increase your graces, to crucify your hearts to the world, and to prepare you and preserve you to his heavenly kingdom; and by afflictions he effects all this, and that according to his covenant too: Ps. lxxxix. 30-31, 'If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my commandments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments.' In these words you have a supposition that the saints may both fall into sins of commission and sins of omission; in the following words you have God's gracious promise: 'Then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquities with stripes.' God engages himself by promise and covenant, not only to chide and check, but also to correct his people for their sins: 'Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.' Afflictions are fruits of God's faithfulness, to which the covenant binds him. God would be unfaithful, if first or last, more or less, he did not afflict his people. Afflictions are part of that gracious covenant which God hath made with his people; afflictions are mercies, yea, covenant mercies, Ps. cxix. 75. Hence it is that God is called the terrible God, keeping covenant and mercy, Neh. i. 5; because, by his covenant of mercy, he is bound to afflict and chastise his people. God by covenant is bound to preserve his people, and not to suffer them to perish; and happy are they that are preserved, whether in salt and vinegar, or in wine and sugar. All the afflictions that come upon a wicked man come upon him by virtue of a covenant of works, and so are cursed unto him; but all the afflictions that come upon a gracious man, they come upon him by virtue of a covenant of grace, and so they are blessed unto him; and therefore he has eminent cause to hold his peace, to lay his hand upon his mouth.

(8) Eighthly, If you would be silent and quiet under afflictions, then dwell much upon this, *viz., That all your afflictions do but reach the worser, the baser, and the more ignoble part of a Christian, viz., his body, his outward man:* 'Though our outboard man decay, yet our inward man is renewed day by day,' 2 Cor. iv. 16. As Aristarchus the heathen said, when he was beaten by the tyrants: Beat on; it is not Aristarchus you beat, it is only his shell. Timothy had a very healthful soul in a crazy body, 1 Tim. v. 23; and Gaius had a very prosperous soul in a weak distempered body, 3 Ep. of John 2. Epictetus and many of the more refined heathens, have long since concluded that the body was the organ or vessel, the soul was the man and merchandise. Now, all the troubles and afflictions that a Christian meets with, they do not reach his soul, they touch not his conscience, they make no breach upon his noble part; and therefore he hath cause to hold his peace, and to lay his hand upon his mouth. The soul is the breath of God, Heb. xii. 9, Zech. xii. 1, the beauty of man, the wonder of angels, and the envy of devils; it is a celestial plant, and of a divine offspring; it is an immortal spirit. Souls are of an angelic nature; a man is an angel clothed in clay; the soul is a greater miracle in man than all the miracles wrought amongst men; the soul is a demi-semi-God dwelling in a house of clay. Now it is not in the power of any outward troubles and afflictions that a Christian meets with to reach his soul; and therefore he may well sit mute under the smarting rod.

(9.) Ninthly, If thou would be silent and quiet under the saddest providences and sorest trials, then *keep up faith in continual exercise*. Now faith, in the exercise of it, will quiet and silence the soul, thus,

[1.] By bringing the soul to sit down satisfied in the naked enjoyments of God, John xiv. 8, Ps. xvii. 13.

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

[3.] By presenting to the soul greater, sweeter, and better things in Christ, than any this world doth afford, Heb. xi. 3, Philip. iii 7, 8.

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

(10.) Tenthly, If you would keep silent, then *keep humble before the Lord*. Oh! labour every day to be more humble and more low and little in your own eyes. Who am I, saith the humble soul, but that God should cross me in this mercy, and take away that mercy, and pass a sentence of death upon every mercy? I am not worthy of the least mercy, I deserve not a crumb of mercy, I have forfeited every mercy, I have improved never a mercy. Only by pride comes contention. It is only pride that puts men upon contending with God and men; an humble soul

will lie quiet at the foot of God, it will be contented with bare commons, Prov. xiii. 16. As you see sheep can live upon the bare commons, which a fat ox cannot. A dinner of green herbs relishes well with the humble man's palate, whereas a stalled ox is but a coarse dish to a proud man's stomach. An humble heart thinks none less than himself, nor none worse than himself; an humble heart looks upon small mercies as great mercies, and great afflictions as small afflictions, and small afflictions as no afflictions; and therefore sits mute and quiet under all. Do but keep humble, and you will keep silent before the Lord. Pride kicks, and flings, and frets, but an humble man hath still his hand upon his mouth. Every thing on this side bell is mercy, much mercy, rich mercy to an humble soul; and therefore he holds his peace.

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

[1.] First, *That the worst that God doth to his people in this world, in order to the making of them a heaven on earth.* He brings them into a wilderness, but it is, that he may speak comfortably to them, Hosea ii. 14; he casts them into the fiery furnace, but it is, that they may have more of his company; do the stones come thick and threefold about Stephen's ears, it is but to knock him the nearer to Christ, the corner-stone, &c., Acts vii.

[2.] Secondly, If you would be silent, then hold fast this principle, viz. *That what God wills is best*, Heb. xii. 10. When he wills sickness, sickness is better than health; when he wills weakness, weakness is better than strength; when he wills want, want is better than wealth; when he wills reproach, reproach is better than honour; when he wills death, death is better than life. As God is wisdom itself, and so knows that which is best, so he is goodness itself, and therefore cannot do anything but that which is best: therefore hold thy peace.

[3.] Thirdly, If thou would be silent under thy greatest afflictions then hold fast to this principle, viz. *That the lord will bear thee company in all thy afflictions*, Isa. xli. 10; chap. xlili. 2; Ps. xxiii. it; Ps. xc. 15; Dan. iii. 25, Gen. xxxix. 20, 21; 2 Tim. iv. 16, 17. These scriptures are breasts full of divine consolation, these wells of salvation are full; will you turn to them and draw out, that your souls may be satisfied and quieted?

[4.] Fourthly, If you would be silent under your afflictions, then hold fast this principle, *That the Lord hath more high, more noble, and more blessed ends in the afflicting of you than he has in the afflicting of the men of the world.* The stalk and the ear of corn fall upon the threshing floor, under one and the same flail, but the one is shattered in pieces, the other is preserved; from one and the same olive, and from under one and the same press is crushed both oil and dregs: but the one is turned up for use, the other thrown out as unserviceable; and by one and the same breath the fields are perfumed with sweetness, and annoyed with

unpleasant savours: so, though afflictions do befall good and bad alike, as the Scripture speaks, Eccles. ix. 2, yet the Lord will effect more glorious ends by those afflictions that befall his people, than he will effect by those that befall wicked men; and therefore the Lord puts his people into the furnace for their trial, but the wicked for their ruin: the one is bettered by affliction, the other is made worse; the one is made soft and tender by afflictions, the other is more hard and obdurate; the one is drawn nearer to God by afflictions, the other is driven further from God, &c.

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

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

(12) Twelfthly and lastly, To silence and quiet your soul under the afflicting hand of God, *dwell much upon the brevity or shortness of man's life*. This present life is not *vita, sed via ad vitam*, life, but a motion, a journey towards life. Man's life, saith one, is the shadow of smoke, yea, the dream of a shadow: saith another, man's life is so short, that Austin doubted whether to call it a dying life or a living death. Thou hast but a day to live, and perhaps thou may be now in the twelfth hour of that day; therefore hold out faith and patience. Thy troubles and thy life shall shortly end together; therefore hold thy peace. Thy grave is going to be made; thy sun is near setting; death begins to call thee off the stage of this world; death stands at thy back; thou must shortly sail forth upon the ocean of eternity; though thou hast a great deal of work to do, a God to honour, a Christ to close with, a soul to save, a race to run, a crown to win, a hell to escape, a pardon to beg, a heaven to make sure, yet thou hast but a little time to do it in; thou hast one foot in the grave, thou art even going ashore on eternity, and wilt thou now cry out of thy affliction? Wilt thou now mutter and murmur when thou art entering upon an unchangeable condition? What extreme folly and madness is it for a man to mutter and murmur when he is just a-going out of prison, and his bolts and chains are just a-knocking off! Why, Christian, this is just thy case; therefore hold thy peace. Thy life is but short, therefore thy troubles cannot be long; hold up and hold out quietly and patiently a little longer, and heaven shall make amends for all, Rom. viii 18.

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