

Mute Christian Under the Smarting Rod - Part 1

by Thomas Brooks

This sermon provides comfort and guidance to afflicted and distressed Christians, encouraging them to find peace and solace in their sufferings and to seek a deeper relationship with God.

Scripture: Job 5:7, Psalm 34:19, Psalm 39:9, Lamentations 3:27, Habakkuk 2:20

Topics: "Affliction", "Trust in God's Sovereignty"

Description

Thomas Brooks emphasizes the importance of maintaining a silent and humble spirit during afflictions, drawing from Psalm 39:9, where David acknowledges God's sovereignty in his suffering. He encourages Christians to recognize God's hand in their trials and to respond with a calm and quiet heart, rather than with complaints or despair. Brooks outlines various forms of silence, distinguishing between unholy and holy silence, and stresses that true silence involves a deep understanding of God's justice and mercy. He reassures believers that afflictions serve a purpose in their spiritual growth and that God's love remains constant even in hardship. Ultimately, Brooks calls for a patient waiting on the Lord, trusting in His goodness and timing.

Transcript

"Mute Christian under the Smarting Rod" or,

"The Silent Soul with Sovereign Antidotes"

by Thomas Brooks, 1659, London.

"I was silent; I would not open my mouth, for

You are the one who has done this!" Psalm 39:9

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

"The Lord is in his Holy Temple--let all the earth keep silence before him." Hab. 2.20.

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

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

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

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

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

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

distempers, he dares not; yes, and that which is more, when he is not.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

II. Secondly, The second thing promised was, the giving of you a little GOOD COUNSEL, that you may so read the following discourse, as that it may turn much to your soul's advantage; for, as many fish and catch nothing, Luke 5:5, so many read good books and get nothing, because they read them over cursorily, slightly, superficially; but he who would read to profit, must then,

First, Read and look up for a blessing--'Paul may plant, and Apollos may water,' but all will be to no purpose, except 'the Lord gives the increase,' 1 Cor. 3:6, 7. God must do the deed, when all is done, or else all that is done will do you no good. If you would have this work successful and effectual, you must look off from man--and look up to God, who alone can make it a blessing to you. As without a blessing from heaven, your clothes cannot warm you, nor your food nourish you, nor medicine cure you, nor friends comfort you, Micah 6:14; so without a blessing from heaven, without the precious breathings and influences of the Spirit, what here is written will do you no good, it will not turn to your account in the day of Christ; therefore cast an eye heavenwards, Haggai 1:6.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Your soul's servant in our dearest Lord,

Thomas Brooks.

THE MUTE CHRISTIAN UNDER THE SMARTING ROD

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thirdly, What this holy silence does not include.

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

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

I answer, There is a sevenfold silence.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Fourthly, There is a SULLEN silence. Many, to gratify an humour, a lust, are sullenly silent; these are troubled with a dumb devil, which was the worst devil of all the devils you read of in the Scripture, Mark 9:17-28. Pliny, in his Natural History, makes mention of a certain people in the Indies, upon the river Ganges, called Astomy, that have no mouth--but do only feed upon the smell of herbs and flowers. Certainly there is a generation among us, who, when they are under the afflicting hand of God, have no mouths to plead with God, no lips to praise God, nor no tongues to justify God. These are possessed with a dumb devil; and this dumb devil had possessed Ahab for a time--1 Kings 21:4, 'And Ahab came into his house, heavy and displeased, and laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat

no bread.' Ahab's ambitious humour, his covetous humour, being crossed, he is resolved to starve himself, and to die of the sullen. A sullen silence is both a sin and a punishment. No devil frets and vexes, wears and wastes the spirits of a man, like this dumb devil--like this sullen silence.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Answer. It includes and takes in these eight things:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Surely these afflictions are but God's love-tokens. Rev. 3:19, 'As many as I love--I rebuke and chasten.' Seneca persuaded his friend Polybius to bear his affliction quietly, because he was the emperor's favorite, telling him, that it was not lawful for him to complain while Caesar was his friend. So says the holy Christian--'O my soul! be quiet, be still; all is sent in love, all is a fruit of divine favor. I see honey upon the top of every twig, I see the rod is but a rosemary branch, I have sugar with my gall, and wine with my

wormwood; therefore be silent, O my soul! And this general conclusion, that all should be for good, had this blessed ejection upon the church--Lam. 3:28, 'He sits alone, and keeps silence, because he has borne it upon him.'

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

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

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

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

(5) Fifthly, The fifth soul-quieting conclusion you have in Lament. 3:33, 'For He does not afflict willingly (or as the Hebrew has it, 'from his heart'), 'nor grieve the children of men.' Christians conclude that God's heart was not in their afflictions, though his hand was. He takes no delight to afflict his children; it goes

against his heart. It is a grief to him to be grievous to them, a pain to him to be punishing of them, a sorrow to him to be striking them. He has no will, no desire, no inclination, no disposition, to that work of afflicting of his people; and therefore he calls it 'his strange work,' Isaiah 28:21. Mercy and punishment--they flow from God, as the honey and the sting from the bee. The bee yields honey of her own nature--but she does not sting but when she is provoked. God takes delight in showing of mercy, Micah 7:18; he takes no pleasure in giving his people up to adversity, Hosea 11:8. Mercy and kindness flows from him freely, naturally; he is never severe, never harsh; he never stings, he never terrifies us--but when he is sadly provoked by us. God's hand sometimes may lie very hard upon his people, when his heart, his affections, at those very times may be yearning towards his people, Jer. 31:18-20.

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

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

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

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

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

'Well,' says a gracious soul, 'The ambitious man gives himself up to his honors--but I give up myself unto God. The voluptuous man gives himself up to his pleasures--but I give up myself to God. The covetous man gives himself up to his bags of money--but I give up myself to God. The wanton man gives himself up

to his lust--but I give up myself to God. The drunkard gives himself up to his cups--but I give up myself to God. The papist gives up himself to his idols--but I give myself to God. The Turk gives up himself to his Mahomet--but I give up myself to God. The heretic gives up himself to his heretical opinions--but I give up myself to God. Lord! lay what burden you will upon me, only let your everlasting arms be under me!

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

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

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

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

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

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

Diseases, aches, sicknesses, pains--they are all the daughters of sin, and he who is not sensible of them as the births and products of sin, does but add to his sin and provoke the Lord to add to his sufferings, Isaiah 26:9-11. No man shall ever be charged by God for feeling his burden, if he neither frets nor faints under it. Grace does not destroy nature--but rather perfects it. Grace is of a noble offspring; it neither turns

men into stocks nor to stoics. The more grace, the more sensible of the tokens, frowns, blows, and lashes--of a displeased Father. Though Calvin, under his greatest pains, was never heard to mutter nor murmur, yet he was heard often to say 'How long, Lord, how long?' A pious commander being shot in battle, when the wound was searched, and the bullet cut out, some standing by, pitying his pain, he replied, Though I groan, yet I bless God I do not grumble. God allows his people to groan, though not to grumble. It is a God-provoking sin to lie stupid and senseless under the afflicting hand of God. God will heat that man's furnace of affliction sevenfold hotter, who is in the furnace but feels it not.

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

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

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

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

As there are two kinds of antidotes against poison, that is, hot and cold; so there are two kinds of antidotes against all the troubles and afflictions of this life, that is, prayer and patience--the one hot, the other cold--the one quenching, the other quickening. Chrysostom understood this well enough when he cried

out--Oh! says he, it is more bitter than death to be robbed of prayer; and thereupon observes that Daniel chose rather to run the hazard of his life, than to lose his prayer. Well! This is the second thing. A holy silence does not exclude prayer; but,

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

It was a good saying of one, 'I hide not my sins--but I show them. I wipe them not away--but I sprinkle them; I do not excuse them--but

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/thomas-brooks/mute-christian-under-the-smarting-rod-part-1/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net