

Mute Christian Under the Smarting Rod -Part 4

by Thomas Brooks

Thomas Brooks explores the theme of God's presence and love during times of apparent abandonment, encouraging believers to find hope and strength in their faith.

Scripture: Psalm 30:6, Psalm 39:9

Topics: "Faith in Trials", "God's Unchanging Love"

Description

Thomas Brooks emphasizes the importance of remaining silent and trusting in God during times of affliction and perceived abandonment. He reassures believers that even in their darkest moments, they are not wholly forsaken, as God's love and presence remain constant, albeit sometimes hidden. Brooks draws on biblical examples of saints who endured similar trials, encouraging Christians to find solace in God's promises and the eventual return of His favor. He reminds them that their suffering is temporary and serves a greater purpose in their spiritual growth and reliance on God.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(4.) Fourthly, Though your Lord has hid his face from you--yet certainly you have his secret presence with you. God is present when he is seemingly absent--'The Lord was in this place, and I knew it not,' says Jacob, Gen. 28:16. The sun many times shines when we do not see it, and the husband is many times in

the house when the wife does not know it. God is in your house, he is in your heart; though you see him not, you feel him not, though you hear him not--Heb. 13:5, 'I will never leave you, nor forsake you;' or, as it may be rendered according to the Greek, 'I will never leave you, neither will I ever forsake you.'

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

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

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

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

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

There was a woman who was thirteen years under desertion by God, which was so vehement, that for the most part of her time she was gladly to keep to her bed through weakness. A godly minister, who was affected with her condition, went to comfort her, and to pray with her; but when he came and offered to do it, she shrieked out, utterly refusing and forbidding him to pray with her, for, said she, I have too many

abused mercies to answer for already. Yet he would not be put off--but prayed by her, and so prevailed with God on her behalf, that the next morning she was delivered from all her fears, and had such exceeding joy, that the like has rarely been heard of. The Lord, who had been long withdrawn from her, returned at length in a way of singular mercy to her.

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

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

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

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

[3.] Thirdly, The Lord, by withdrawing from his people, will enhance and raise the price, and commend the worth, excellency, sweetness, and usefulness of several precious promises, which otherwise would be but as dry breasts, and us useless weapons to the soul, 2 Peter 1:4. As in Micah 7, 'He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us.' Isaiah 54:7, 8; Heb. 13:5, 6; Heb. 2:3; Psalm 5:12, 'For you, Lord will bless the righteous; with favor you will compass him,' or crown him, 'as with a shield.' The Lord will compass the righteous about with his favor, as the crown compasses the head, as the Hebrew imports. Psalm 112:4, 'Unto the upright there arises light in darkness--he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.' Jer.

31:37, 'This is what the Lord says: Only if the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth below be searched out, will I reject all the descendants of Israel because of all they have done' As surely as heaven cannot be measured, nor the foundations of the earth searched by the skill or power of any mortal man--so sure and certain it is, that God will not utterly cast off his people, no--not for all the evil which they have done!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[7.] Seventhly, By divine withdrawals, you are made more conformable to Christ your head and husband, who was under spiritual desertion as well as you. Mat. 27:46, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' Psalm 22:1, 2. There is an hidden emphasis in the Hebrew word--Eli signifies a strong God; Eli, Eli--My strong God, my strong God. The unity of Christ's person was never dissolved, nor his graces were never diminished. In the midst of this terrible storm his faith fortifies and strengthens itself upon the strength of God, My God, any God; yet in respect of divine protection and divine solace, he was for some

time forsaken of his Father. And if this be your case, you are herein but made conformable to your Lord and master; no, you do but sip of that bitter cup of which Christ drank deep; your cloud is no cloud to that which Christ was under. But,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(4.) Fourthly, Our Lord Jesus Christ was sadly reproached and falsely accused. His precious name, which deserves to be always written in characters of gold, was often eclipsed before the sun was eclipsed at his death. His sweet name, which was sweeter than all sweets, was often crucified before his body. Oh, the stones of reproach which were frequently rolled upon that name by which we must be saved, if ever we are saved! Oh, the jeers, the scoffs, the scorns that were cast upon that name which alone can bless us! The name of Jesus, says Chrysostom, has a thousand treasures of joy and comfort in it. The name of a Savior, says Bernard, is honey in the mouth, and music in the ear, and a jubilee in the heart. And yet

where is the heart that can conceive, or the tongue that can express, how much dung and filth has been cast upon Christ's name; and how many sharp arrows of reproach and scorn has been, and daily, yes, hourly, are, shot by the world at Christ's name and honor? Such ignominious reproaches were cast upon Christ and his name in the time of his life and at his death, that the sun did blush, and masked himself with a cloud, that he might no longer behold them. Mat. 11:19, 'The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a drunkard, a friend of publicans and sinners.' But was he such an one? No--'Wisdom is justified of her children.' Wisdom's children will stand up and justify her before all the world. Mat. 27:63, 'Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days, I will rise again.' But was he a deceiver of the people? No, he was the faithful and true witness, Rev. 1:5, chapter 3:14. John 7:20, 'The people answered and said, You have a devil, who goes about to kill you?' chapter 8:48, 'The Jews answered him--Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?' chapter 10:20, 'Many of them said--He is demon-possessed and raving mad.'

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

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

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

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

reproaches and scorn that is cast upon his name and credit in this world?

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

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

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

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

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

miserably.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Alas! all the scorn and contempt that is cast upon all the saints all the world over, is nothing to that which is cast upon the great God every hour; and yet he is patient. Ah! how harshly do most men think of God, and how harshly do they speak of God, and how repulsive do they behave towards God; and yet he bears with it all. Those who will not spare God himself, his name, his truth, his honor; shall we think it much that they spare not us or our names? etc. Surely not. Why should we think that they should give us good words--who cannot afford God a good word from one week's end to another? yes, from one year's end to another? Why should we think that they should cry out 'Hosanna, hosanna!' to us--when as every day they cry out of Christ, 'Crucify him, crucify him!' Mat. 10:25, 'It is enough for the disciple that he be as his

master, and the servant as his lord; if they have called the master of the house Beelzebub' (or a master-fly, or a ash-heap god, or the chief devil), 'how much more shall they call those of his household!' It is preferment enough for the servant to be as his Lord; and if they make no bones of staining and blaspheming the name of the Lord, never wonder if they soil your name. And let this suffice to quiet and silence your hearts, Christians, under all that scorn and contempt that is cast upon your names and reputations in this world.

The tenth and last objection is this,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ans. [1.] First, for the trial of his people, and for the differencing and distinguishing of them from others. As the furnace tries gold, so delays will try what metal a Christian is made of. Delays will try both the truth and the strength of a Christian's graces. Delays are a Christian touchstone--which will try what metal men are

made of, whether they be gold or dross, silver or tin, whether they are sincere or unsound; whether they are real or rotten Christians. As a father, by crossing and delaying his children, tries their disposition and makes a full discovery of them; so that he can say--that child is of a muttering and grumbling disposition, and that it is of an impatient and wayward disposition--but the rest are of a meek sweet, humble, and gentle disposition. So the Lord, by the delaying and crossing of his children, discovers their different dispositions.

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

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

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

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

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

[4.] Fourthly, God delays and puts off his people many times, that he may make a fuller discovery of themselves to themselves. Few Christians see themselves and understand themselves rightfully. By

delays God discovers much of a man's sinful self to his pious self; much of his worser part to his better part; of his ignoble part to his most noble part. When the fire is put under the pot--then the scum appears; so when God delays a poor soul, Oh! how does the scum of pride, the scum of murmuring, the scum of quarreling, the scum of distrust, the scum of impatience, the scum of despair--discover itself in the heart of a poor creature? Ezek. 24:6.

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

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

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

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

[7.] Seventhly, and lastly, The Lord delays his people, that heaven may be the more sweet to them at last. Here on earth, they meet with many delays and with many put-offs; but in heaven they shall never meet with one put-off, with one delay. Here many times they call and cry--and can get no answer; here they knock and pound--and yet the door of grace and mercy opens not to them; but in heaven they shall have mercy at the first word, at the first knock! There, whatever heart can wish--shall without delay be given. Here God seems to say sometimes--Souls! you have mistaken the door; or it is not the right time; or others

must be served before you; or come some other time, etc. But in heaven God always answers immediately; and all the sweetness and blessedness and happiness of that state presents itself every hour to the soul. There God has never, God will never--say to any of his saints in heaven, 'Come tomorrow.' Such language the saints sometimes hear here--but such language is no way suitable to a glorified condition.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

which you meet with in this world--is all the hell that you shall ever have! Here and now you have your hell. Hereafter you shall have your heaven! This is the worst of your condition; the best is yet to come! Lazarus had his hell first, his heaven last; but Dives had his heaven first, and his hell at last. You have all your pangs, and pains, and throes here--that ever you shall have! Your ease, and rest, and pleasure--is yet to

come. Here you have all your bitters; your sweets are yet to come! Here you have your sorrows; your joys are yet to come! Here you have all your winter nights; your summer days are yet to come! Here you have your evil things; your good things are yet to come! Death will put an end to all your sins--and to all your sufferings! Death will be an inlet to those joys, delights, and comforts--which shall never have an end! Who can seriously meditate upon this, and not be silent under God's most smarting rod?

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

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

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

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

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

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