

# The Crook in the Lot - Part 1

by Thomas Boston

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*The crook in the lot is a result of God's providence and decree, and it serves as a means of discipline and growth for us to come to a Christian deportment under it.*

**Scripture:** Job 2:10, Psalm 46:10, Psalm 62:5, Proverbs 3:5, Isaiah 45:9, Romans 8:28, Philippians 4:6, Hebrews 12:11, James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:6

**Topics:** "Sovereign Providence", "Spiritual Discipline"

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## Description

Thomas Boston preaches about the importance of recognizing that the crook in our lot is of God's making, designed for various purposes such as trial, correction, prevention of sin, and exercise of grace. He emphasizes the need for Christians to submit to the crook in their lot, understanding that it is part of God's sovereign and beneficial plan for their lives. Boston encourages believers to welcome the discipline of the crook, knowing that it is a means of nurturing their faith, weaning them from the world, and prompting them to seek their ultimate rest in God.

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## Transcript

A just view of afflicting incidents is altogether necessary to a Christian deportment under them; and that view is to be obtained only by faith, not by sense; for it is the light of the world alone that represents them justly, discovering in them the work of God, and consequently, designs becoming the Divine perfections. When they are perceived by the eye of faith, and duly considered, we have a just view of afflicting incidents, fitted to quell the turbulent motions of corrupt affections under dismal outward appearances.

It is under this view that Solomon, in the preceding part of this chapter, advances several paradoxes, which are surprising determinations in favor of certain things, that, to the eye of sense, looking gloomy and hideous, are therefore generally reputed previous and shocking. He pronounces the day of one's death to be better than the day of his birth; namely, the day of the death of one, who, having become the friend of God through faith, has led a life to the honor of God, and service of his generation, and in this way raised to himself the good and savvy name better than precious ointment. In like manner, he pronounces the house of mourning to be preferable to the house of feasting, sorrow to laughter, and a wise man's rebuke to a fool's song. As for that, even though the latter are indeed the more pleasant, yet the former are the more profitable. And observing with concern, how men are in hazard, not only from the world's frowns and ill-usage, oppression making a wise man mad, but also from its smiles and caresses, a gift destroying the heart. Therefore, since whatever way it goes there is danger, he pronounces the end of every worldly thing

better than the beginning of it. And from the whole he justly infers, that it is better to be humble and patient than proud and impatient under afflicting dispensation; since, in the former case, we wisely submit to what is really best; in the latter, we fight against it. And he dissuades from being angry with our lot, because of the adversity found in it. He cautions against making odious comparisons of former and present times, in that point insinuating undue reflections on the providence of God: and, against that querulous and fretful disposition. He first prescribes a general remedy, namely, holy wisdom, as that which enables us to make the best of everything, and even gives life in killing circumstances; and then a particular remedy, consisting in a due application of that wisdom, towards taking a just view of the case: "Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight which He has made crooked?"

In which words are proposed, 1. The remedy itself; 2. The suitableness of it.

1. The remedy itself is a wise eyeing of the hand of God in all we find to bear hard on us: "Consider the work of God," namely, in the crooked, rough, and disagreeable parts of your lot, the crosses you find in it. You see very well the cross itself. Yea, you turn it over and over in your mind and leisurely view it on all sides. You look to this and the other second cause of it, and so you are in a foam and a fret. But, would you be quieted and satisfied in the matter, lift up your eyes towards heaven, see the doing of God in it, the operation of His hand. Look at that, and consider it well; eye the first cause of the crook in your lot; behold how it is the work of God, His doing.

2. Such a view of the crook in our lot is very suitable to still improper risings of heart, and quiet us under them: "For who can make that straight which God has made crooked?" As to the crook in your lot, God has made it; and it must continue while He will have it so. Should you ply your utmost force to even it, or make it straight, your attempt will be vain: it will not change for all you can do. Only He who made it can mend it, or make it straight. This consideration, this view of the matter, is a proper means at once to silence and to satisfy men, and so bring them to a dutiful submission to their Maker and Governor, under the crook in their lot.

Now, we take up the purpose of the text under these three heads.

I. Whatever crook there is in our lot, it is of God's making.

II. What God sees fit to mar, no one will be able to mend in his lot.

III. The considering of the crook in the lot as the work of God, or of His making, is a proper means to bring us to a Christian deportment under it.

I. Whatever crook there is in our lot, it is of God's making.

Here, two things are to be considered, namely, the crook itself, and God's making of it.

1. As to the crook itself, the crook in the lot, for the better understanding of it, these few things that follow are premised.

First. There is a certain train or course of events, by the providence of God, falling to every one of us during our life in this world. And that is our lot, as being allotted to us by the sovereign God, our Creator and Governor, "in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways." This train of events is widely different to different persons, according to the will and pleasure of the sovereign Manage, who orders men's condition in the world in a great variety, some moving in a higher, some in a lower sphere.

Second. In that train or course of events, some fall out, cross to us, and against the grain; and these make the crook in our lot. While we are here, there will be cross events, as well as agreeable ones, in our lot and condition. Sometimes things are softly and agreeably gliding on; but, by and by, there is some incident which alters that course, grates us, and panes us, as, when we have made a wrong step we begin to limp.

Third. Everybody's lot in this world has some crook in it. Complainers are apt to make odious comparisons. They look about, and take a distant view of the condition of others, can discern nothing in it but what is straight, and just to one's wish; so they pronounce their neighbor's lot wholly straight. But that is a false verdict; there is no perfection here; no lot out of heaven without a crook. For, as to "all the works that are done under the sun, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. That which is crooked cannot be made straight. " Who would have thought but that Haman's lot was very straight, while his family was in a flourishing condition, and he prospering in riches and honor, being prime minister of state in the Persian court, and standing high in the king's favor? Yet there was, at the saline time, a crook in his lot, which so galled him, that "all this availed him nothing. " Every one feels for himself, when he is pinched, though others do not perceive it. Nobody's lot, in this world, is wholly crooked; there are always some straight and even parts in it. Indeed, when men's passions, having gotten up, have cast a mist over their minds, they are ready to say, all is wrong with them, nothing right. But, though in hell that tale is and ever will be true, yet it is never true in this world. For there, indeed, there is not a drop of comfort allowed; but here it always holds good, that "it is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed. "

Fourth. The crook in the lot came into the world by sin: it is owing to the fall, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin;" under which death the crook in the lot is comprehended, as a state of comfort or prosperity is, in Scripture style, expressed by living. Sin so bowed the hearts and minds of men, that they became crooked in respect of the holy law; and God justly so bowed their lot, that it became crooked too. And this crook in our lot inseparably follows our sinful condition, till dropping this body of sin and death, we get within heaven's gates.

These being premised, a crook in the lot speaks, in general, two things, (1.) Adversity, (2.) Continuance. Accordingly it makes the day of adversity, opposed in the day of prosperity, in the verse immediately following the text.

The crook in the lot, is, First, some one or other piece of adversity. The prosperous part of one's lot, which goes forward according to one's wish, is the straight and even part of it; the adverse part, going a contrary way, is the crooked part of it. God has intermixed these two in men's condition in this world; that, as there is some prosperity in it, making the straight line, so there is also some adversity, making the crooked. This mixture has place, not only in the lot of saints, who are told, that "in the world they shall have tribulation, " but even in the lot of all, as already observed. Secondly, it is adversity of some continuance. We do not reckon it a crooked thing, which, though forcibly bent and bowed together, yet presently recovers its former straightness. These are twinges of the rod of adversity, which passed like a stitch on one's side, all is immediately set to right's again; one's lot may be suddenly overclouded, and the cloud vanish before he is aware. But under the crook, one having leisure to find his smart, is in some concern to get the crook made straight. So the crook in the lot is adversity, continued for a shorter or longer time.

Now there is a threefold crook in the lot incident to the children of men.

1. One made by a cross dispensation, which, however in itself passing, yet has lasting effects. Such a crook did Herod's cruelty make in the lot of the mothers in Bethlehem, who by the murderers were left

"weeping for their slain children, and would not be comforted, because they were not. " A slip of the foot may soon be made, which will make a man go limping ever after. "As the fishes are taken in an evil net: so are the sons of men snared in an evil time. " A thing may fall out in a moment under which the party shall go halting to the grave.

2. There is a crook made by a train of cross dispensation, whether of the same or different kinds, following hard on one another, and leaving lasting effects behind them. Thus in the case of Job, while one messenger of evil tidings was yet speaking, another came. Cross events coming one on the neck of another, deep calling to deep, make a sore crook. In that case, the part is like one who recovering his sliding foot from one unfirm piece of ground, sets it on another equally unfirm, which immediately gives way under him too; or, like one who, travelling in an unknown mountainous track, after having with difficulty made his way over one mountain, is expected to see the plain country; but instead there comes in view, time after time, a new mountain to be passed. This crook is Asaph's lot nearly to have made him give up all his religion, until he "went into the sanctuary," where this mystery of providence was unriddled to him. Solomon observes, "That there are just men to whom it happens according to the work of the wicked. " Providence taking a run against them, as if they were to be run down for good and all. Whoever they are to whose life in no part of it affords them experience of this, surely Joseph missed not of it in his young days, nor Jacob in his middle days, nor Peter in his old days, nor our Savior all His days.

3. There is a crook made by one cross dispensation, with lasting effects of it coming in the room of another removed. This crook straightened, there is another made in its place: and so there is still a crook. Lack of children had long been the crook in Rachel's lot. That was at length made even to her mind; but then she got another in its stead, hard labor in travailing to bring forth. This world is a wilderness, in which we may indeed get our station changed; but the move will be out of one wilderness to another. When one part of the lot is made even, quickly some other part of it will be crooked.

More particularly, the crook in the lot has in it four things of the nature of that which is crooked.

(1.) Disagreeableness. A crooked thing is wayward; and, being laid to a rule, answers it not, but declines from it. There is not, in anybody's lot, any such thing as a crook, in respect of the will and purposes of God. Take the most harsh and dismal dispensation in one's lot and lay it to the eternal decree, made in the depth of infinite wisdom before the world began, and it will answer it exactly, without the least deviation, "all things being worked after the counsel of His will. " Lay it to the providential will of God, in the government of the world, and there is a perfect harmony. If Paul is to be bound at Jerusalem, and "delivered into the hands of the Gentiles," it is "the will of the Lord it should be so." Therefore the greatest crook of the lot on earth is straight in heaven. There is no disagreeableness in it there. But in every person's lot there is a crook in respect of their mind and natural inclination. The adverse dispensation lies cross to that rule, and will by no means answer it, nor harmonise with it. When Divine Providence lays the one to the other, there is a manifest disagreeableness--the man's will goes one way, and the dispensation another way--the will bends upwards, and cross events press down: so they are contrary. And there, and only there, lies the crook. It is this disagreeableness which makes the crook in the lot fit matter of trial and exercise to us in this our state of probation: in which, if you would approve yourself to God, walking by faith, not by sight, you must quiet yourself in the will and purpose of God, and not insist that it should be according to your mind.

(2) Unsightliness. Crooked things are unpleasant to the eye; and no crook in the lot seems to be joyous, but grievous, making an unsightly appearance. Therefore men need to beware of giving way to their

thoughts to dwell on the crook in their lot, and of keeping it too much in view. David shows a hurtful experience of his, in that kind. "While I was musing the fire burned " Jacob acted a wiser part, called his youngest son Benjamin, the son of the right hand, whom the dying mother had named Benoni, the son of my sorrow. By this means providing that the crook in his lot should not be set afresh in his view on every occasion of mentioning the name of his son. Indeed, a Christian may safely take a steady and leisurely view of the crook in his lot in the light of the holy Word, which represents it as the discipline of the covenant. So faith will discover a hidden sightliness in it, under a very unsightly outward appearance; perceiving the suitableness of it to the infinite goodness, love, and wisdom of God, and to the real and most valuable interests of the party; by which means one comes to take pleasure, and that a most refined pleasure, in distress. But whatever the crook in the lot is to the eye of faith, it is not all pleasant to the eye of sense.

(3.) Unfitness for motion. Solomon observes the cause of the uneasy and ungraceful walking of the lame; "The legs of the lame are not equal." This uneasiness they find, who are exercised about the crook in their lot: a high spirit and a low adverse lot makes great difficulty in the Christian walk. There is nothing that gives temptation more easy access than the crook in the lot; nothing more apt to occasion out-of-the-way steps. Therefore, says the apostle, "Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way." They who are laboring under it are to be pitied, then, and not to be rigidly censured; though they are rare persons who learn this lesson, till taught by their own experience. It is long since Job made an observation in this case, which holds good to this day; He that is ready to slip with his feet, is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease.

(4.) Aptness to catch hold and entangle, like hooks, "fish-hooks." The crook in the lot does so very readily make impression, to be ruffling and fretting one's spirit, irritating corruption, that Satan fails not to make diligent use of it for these dangerous purposes; which point once gained by the tempter, the tempted, before he is aware, finds himself entangled as in a thicket, out of which he does not know how to extricate himself. In that temptation it often proves like a crooked stick troubling a standing pool, which not only raises up the mud all over, but brings up from the bottom some very ugly thing. Thus it brought up a spice of blasphemy and atheism in Asaph's case; "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence: " as if he had said, there is nothing at all in religion, it is a vain and empty thing, that profits nothing; I was a fool to have been in care about purity and holiness, whether of heart or life. Ah! is this the pious Asaph? How is he turned so quite unlike himself! But the crook in the lot is a handle by which the tempter makes surprising discoveries of latent corruption even in the best.

This is the nature of the crook in the lot; let us now observe what part of the lot it falls in. Three conclusions may be established upon this head.

First. It may fall in any part of the lot; there is no exempted one in the case: for, sin being found in every part, the crook may take place in any part. Being "all as an unclean thing, we all fade as a leaf: " The main stream of sin, which the crook readily follows, runs in very different channels in the case of different persons. And in regard of the various dispositions of the minds of men, that will prove a sinking weight to one, which another would go very lightly under.

Secondly. It may at once fall into many parts of the lot, the Lord calling, as in a solemn day, one's terrors round about. Sometimes God makes one notable crook in a man's lot; but its name may be Gad, being but the forerunner of a troop which comes. Then the crooks are multiplied, so that the party is made to halt on each side. While one stream, let in from one quarter, is running full against him, another is let in on him

from another quarter, till in the end the waters break in on every hand.

Thirdly. It often falls in the tender part; I mean, that part of the lot in which one is least able to bear it, or at least thinks he is so. "It was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it. But it was you, a man my equal, my guide, and my acquaintance." If there is any one part of the lot which of all others one is disposed to nestle in, the thorn will readily be laid there, especially if he belongs to God; in that thing in which he is least of all able to be touched, he will be sure to be pressed. There the trial will be taken of him; for there is the grand competition with Christ. "I take from them the desires of their eyes, and that upon which they set their minds. " Since the crook in the lot is the special trial appointed for every one, it is altogether reasonable, and becoming the wisdom of God, that it fall on that which of all things most rivals him.

But more particularly, the crook may be observed to fall in these four parts of the lot.

First, in the natural part, affecting persons considered as of the make allotted for them by the great God that formed all things. The parents of mankind, Adam and Eve, were formed together sound and entire, without the least blemish, whether in soul or body; but in the formation of their posterity, there often appears a notable variation from the original. Bodily defects, superfluities, deformities, infirmities, natural or accidental, make the crook in the lot of some. They have something unsightly or grievous about them. Crooks of this kind, more or less observable, are very common and ordinary; and the best are not exempted from them; and it is purely owing to sovereign pleasure they are not more numerous. Tender eyes made the crook in the lot of Leah. Rachel's beauty was balanced with barrenness, the crook in her lot. Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles, was it should seem, no personable man, but a mean outward appearance, for which fools were apt to condemn him. Timothy was of a weak and sickly frame. And there is a yet far more considerable crook in the lot of the lame, the blind, the deaf, and the dumb. Some are weak to a degree in their intellects; and it is the crook in the lot of several bright souls to be overcast with clouds, notably bemisted and darkened, from the crazy bodies they are lodged in. An eminent instance of which we have in the grave, wise, and patient Job, "going mourning without the sun; yea, standing up and crying in the congregation. "

Secondly, it may fall in the honorary part. There is an honor due to all men, the small as well as the great, and that upon the ground of the original constitution of human nature, as it was framed in the image of God. But in the sovereign disposal of holy Providence, the crook in the lot of some falls here; they are neglected and slighted; their credit is still kept low; they go through the world under a cloud, being put into an ill name, their reputation sunk.

This sometimes is the natural consequence of their own foolish and sinful conduct; as in the case of Dinah, who, by her gadding abroad to satisfy her youthful curiosity, regardless of, and therefore not waiting for, a providential call, brought a lasting stain on her honor. But where the Lord intends a crook of this kind in one's lot, innocence will not be able to ward it off in an ill-natured world; neither will true merit be able to make head against it, to make one's lot stand straight in that part. Thus David represents his case. "They that saw me without, fled from me. I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind. I am like a broken vessel. For I have heard the slander of many. "

Thirdly, it may fall in the vocational part. Whatever is a man's calling or station in the world, be it sacred or civil, the crook in their lot may take its place in it. Isaiah was an eminent prophet, but most unsuccessful. Jeremiah met with such a train of discouragements and ill usage in the exercise of his sacred function,

that he was very near giving it up, saying, "I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his none. " The Psalmist observes this crook often to be made in the lot of some men very industrious in their civil business, who sow in the fields; and at times "God blesses them - and does not allow their cattle to decrease. But again, they are minished and brought low, through oppression, affliction and sorrow. " Such a crook was made in Job's lot after he had long stood even. Some manage their employments with all care and diligence; the husbandman carefully laboring his ground; the sheep-master, "diligent to know the state of his flocks, and looking well to his herds;" the tradesman early and late at his business; the merchant diligently plying his, watching and falling in with the most fair and promising opportunities; but there is such a crook in that part of their lot, as all they are able to do can by no means make even. For why? The most proper means used for compassing an end are insignificant without a word of Divine appointment, commanding their success. "Who is he that says, and it comes to pass, when the Lord does not command it? " People ply their business with skill and industry, but the wind turns in their face. Providence crosses their enterprises, disconcerts their measures, frustrates their hopes and expectations, renders their endeavors unsuccessful, and so puts and keeps them still in straitened circumstances. "So the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise." Providence interposing, crooks the measures which human prudence and industry had laid straight towards the respective ends; so the swift lose the race, and the strong the battle, and the wise miss of bread; while in the mean time, some one of other providential incident, supplying the defect of human wisdom, conduct, and ability, the slow gain the race and carry the prize; the weak win the battle and enrich themselves with the spoil; and bread falls into the lap of the fool.

Lastly, it may fall in the relational part. Relations are the joints of society; and there the crook in the lot may take place, one's smartest pain being often felt in these joints. They are in their nature the springs of man's comfort; yet, they often turn the greatest bitterness to him. Sometimes this crook is occasioned by the loss of relation. Thus a crook was made in the lot of Jacob, by means of the death of Rachel, his beloved wife, and the loss of Joseph, his son and darling, which had like to have made him go halting to the grave. Job laments this crook in his lot, "You have made desolate all my company; " meaning his dear children, every one of whom he had laid in the grave, not so much as one son or daughter left him. Again, sometimes it is made through the afflicting hand of God lying heavy on them: which, in virtue of their relation, recoils on the party, as is feelingly expressed by that believing woman, "Have mercy on me, O Lord; my daughter is grievously vexed." Ephraim felt the smart of family afflictions, "when he called his son's name Beriah, because it went evil with his house. " Since all is not only vanity, but vexation of spirit, it can hardly miss but the more of these springs of comfort are opened to a man, he must at one time or other find he has but the more sources of sorrows to gush out and spring in on him; the sorrow always proportioned to the comfort found in them, or expected from them. And, finally, the crook is sometimes made here by their proving uncomfortable through the disagreeableness of their temper and disposition. There was a crook in Job's lot, by means of an undutiful, ill-natured wife. In Abigail's by means of a surly, ill-tempered husband. In Eli's through the perverseness and obstinacy of his children. In Jonathan's through the furious temper of his father. So do men oftentimes find their greatest cross where they expected their greatest comfort. Sin has unhinged the whole creation, and made every relation susceptible of the crook. In the family are found masters hard and unjust, servants froward and unfaithful; in a neighbourhood, men selfish and uneasy; in the church, ministers unedifying, and offensive in their walk, and people contemptuous and disorderly, a burden to the spirits of ministers; in the state, magistrates oppressive, and discountenancers of that which is good, and subjects turbulent and seditious. All these cause crooks in the lot of their relatives. And thus far of the crook itself.

II. Having seen the crook itself, we are in the next place to consider of God's making it. And here is to be shown, 1. That it is of God's making. 2. How it is of his making. 3. Why he makes it.

First. That the crook in the lot, whatever it is, is of God's making appears from these three considerations.

First, It cannot be questioned but the crook in the lot, considered as a crook, is a penal evil, whatever it is for the matter of it; that is, whether the thing in itself, its immediate cause and occasion, are sinful or not, it is certainly a punishment of affliction. Now, as it may be, as such, holily and justly brought on us, by our Sovereign Lord and Judge, so he expressly claims the doing or making of it. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord has not done it?" Wherefore, since there can be no penal evil but of God's making, and the crook in the lot is such an evil, it is necessarily concluded to be of God's making.

Secondly, it is evident, from the Scripture doctrines of divine providence, that God brings about every man's lot, and all the parts of it. He sits at the helm of human affairs, and turns them about in whatever way he lists. "Whatever the Lord pleased, that He did in heaven and in earth, in the seas and all deep places. " There is not anything whatever befalls us without his overruling hand. The same providence that brought us out of the womb, brings us to, and fixes us in the condition and place allotted for us, by him who "has determined the times and the bounds of our habitation. " It overrules the smallest and most casual things about us, such as "hairs of our head being all numbered;" a "lot cast into the lap. " Yea, the free acts of our will, by which we choose for ourselves: for even "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as rivers of water. "And the whole steps we make, and which others make in reference to us; for "the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walks to direct his steps. " And this, whether these steps causing the crook are deliberate and sinful ones, such as Joseph s brothers selling him into Egypt; or whether they are undesigned, such as manslaughter purely casual, as when one hewing wood kills his neighbor with "the head of the axe slipping from the helve. " For there is a holy and wise providence that governs the sinful and the heedless actions of men, as a rider does a lame horse, of whose halting, not he, but the horse's lameness is the true and proper cause; wherefore in the former of these cases, God is said to have sent Joseph into Egypt, and in the latter, to deliver one into his neighbor's hand.

Lastly, God has, by an eternal decree, immovable as mountains of brass appointed the whole of every one's lot, the crooked part of it, as well as the straight. By the same eternal decree, by which the high and low parts of the earth, the mountains and the valleys, were appointed, are the heights and the depths, the prosperity and adversity, in the lot of the inhabitants of there determined; and they are brought about, in time, in a perfect agreeableness there.

The mystery of providence, in the government of the world, is, in all the parts of it, the building reared up of God, in exact conformity to the plan in his decree, "who works all things after the counsel of his own will. " So that there is never a crook in one's lot but may be run up to this original. Of this Job piously sets us an example in his own case: "He is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desires, even that he does. For he performs the thing that is appointed for me; and many such things are with him. "

Second. That we may see how the crook in the lot is of God's making, we must distinguish between pure sinless crooks and impure sinful ones.

First, there are pure and sinless crooks; which are mere afflictions, cleanly crosses, grievous indeed, but not defiling. Such was Lazarus's poverty, Rachel's barrenness, Leah's tender eyes, the blindness of the man who had been so from his birth. Now, the crooks of this kind are of God's making, by the efficacy of his power directly bringing them to pass and causing them to be. He is the maker of the poor. "Whoso

mocks the poor, reproaches his Maker; " that is, reproaches God who made him poor, according to that, "The Lord makes poor. " It is he that has the key of the womb, and as he sees meet shuts it, or opens it. And it is "He that forms the eyes. " And the man was "born blind, that the works of God should be made manifest in him. " Therefore he says to Moses, "who makes the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord? " Such crooks in the lot are of God's making in the most ample sense, and in their full comprehension, being the direct effects of his agency, as well as the heavens and the earth.

Secondly, There are impure sinful crooks, which, in their own nature, are sins as well as afflictions, defiling as well as grievous. Such was the crook made in David's lot, through his family disorders, the defiling of Tamar, the murder of Amnon, the rebellion of Absalom, all of them unnatural. Of the same kind was that made in Job's lot, by the Sabeans and Chaldeans taking away his substance and slaying his servants. As these were the afflictions of David and Job respectively, so they were the sins of the actors, the unhappy instruments of it. Thus one and the same thing may be to one a heinous sin, defiling and laying him under guilt, and to another an affliction laying him under suffering only. Now, the crooks of this kind are not of God's making, in the same latitude as those of the former; for He neither puts evil in the heart of any, nor stirs up to it. "He cannot be tempted with evil, neither does He tempt any man. " But they are of his making, by his holy permission of them, powerful bounding of them, and wise overruling of them to some good end.

1st. He holily permits them, suffering men "to walk in their own ways." Though He is not the author of those sinful crooks, causing them to be, by the efficacy of His power; yet, if He did not permit them, willing not to hinder them, they could not be at all; for "He shuts and no man opens. " But He justly withholds His grace which the sinner does not desire, takes off the restraint under which he is uneasy, and since the sinner will be gone, lays the reins on his neck, and leaves him to swing of his lust. "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone. " "Israel would none of Me: so I gave them up to their own heart's lusts. " In which unhappy situation the sinful crook does, from the sinner's own proper motion, naturally and infallibly follow; even as water runs down a hill, wherever there is a gap left open before it. So in these circumstances, "Israel walked in their own counsels. " And thus this kind of crook is of God's making, as a just judge, punishing the sufferer by it. This view of the matter silenced David under Shimei's cursings; "Let him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord has bidden him. "

2ndly. He powerfully bounds them. "The remainder of wrath" (that is, the creature's wrath) "you shall restrain. " Did not God bound these crooks, however sore they are in any one's case, they would be yet sorer. But He says to the sinful instrument, as He said to the sea, "Until this time you shall come, but no further; and here your proud waves shall be stayed. " He lays a restraining band on him, that he cannot go one step farther, in the way his impetuous lust drives, than he sees meet to permit. Thus it comes to pass, that the crook of this kind is neither more nor less, but just as great as He by His powerful bounding makes it to be. An eminent instance of this we have in the case of Job, whose lot was crooked through a peculiar agency of the devil; but even to that grand sinner God set a bound in the case: "The Lord said to Satan, Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him. " Now, Satan went the full length of the bound, leaving nothing within the compass of it untouched, which he saw could make for his purpose. But he could by no means move one step beyond it to carry his point, which he could not gain within it. And therefore, to make the trial greater, and the crook sorer, nothing remains but that the bound set should be removed, and the sphere of his agency enlarged; for which cause he says, "But touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse You to Your face;" and it being removed accordingly, but withal a new one set, "Behold, he is in your hand, but save his life;" the crook was carried to the utmost that the

new bound would permit, in a consistency with his design of bringing Job to blaspheme; "Satan smote him with sore boils, from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. " And had it not been for this bound, securing Job's life, he, after finding this attempt unsuccessful too, had doubtless despatched him at once.

3rdly. He wisely overrules them to some good purpose, becoming the Divine perfections. While the sinful instrument has an ill design in the crook caused by him, God directs it to a holy and good end. In the disorders of David's family Amnon's design was to gratify a brutish lust; Absalom's to glut himself with revenge, and to satisfy his pride and ambition; but God meant by that means to punish David for his sin in the matter of Uriah. In the crook made in Job's lot, by Satan, and the Sabeans and Chaldeans, his instruments, Satan's design was to cause Job to blaspheme, and theirs to gratify their covetousness; but God had another design in this way becoming Himself, namely, to manifest Job's sincerity and uprightness. Did he not wisely and powerfully overrule those crooks made in men's lot, no good could come out of them, hut He always overrules them so as to fulfil His own holy purposes in this way (howbeit the sinner means not so); for His designs cannot miscarry, His "counsel shall stand." So the sinful crook is, by the overruling hand of God, turned about to His own glory and His people's good in the end. According to the word, "The Lord has made all things for Himself. " "All things work together for the good to them that love God. " Thus Haman's plot for the destruction of the Jews "was turned to the contrary. " And the crook made in Joseph's lot, by his own brothers selling him into Egypt, though it was on their part most sinful, and of a most mischievous design; yet, as it was of God's making, by his holy permission, powerful bounding, and wisely overruling it, had an issue well becoming the Divine wisdom and goodness; both of which Joseph notices to them: "As for you, you thought evil against me; but God meant it to good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to keep many people alive. "

III. It remains to inquire why God makes a crook in one's lot? And this is to be cleared by discovering the design of that dispensation: a matter which it concerns every one to know, and carefully to notice, in order to a Christian improvement of the crook in their lot. The design of it seems to be chiefly sevenfold.

First, the trial of one's state, whether one is in the state of grace or not? Whether a sincere Christian, or a hypocrite? Though every affliction is trying, yet here I conceive lies the main providential trial a man is brought into, with reference to his state; forasmuch as the crook in the lot being a matter of continued course, one has occasion to open and show himself again and again in the same thing; from where it comes to pass, that it ministers ground for a decision in that momentous point.

It was plainly on this foundation that the trial of Job's state was put. The question was, whether Job was an upright and sincere servant of God, as God himself testified of him: or but a mercenary one, a hypocrite, as Satan alleged against him? And the trial of this was put on the crook to be made in his lot. Accordingly, that which all his friends, save Elihu, the last speaker, did, in their reasonings with him under his trial, aim at, was to prove him a hypocrite; Satan thus making use of these good men for gaining his point.

As God made trial of Israel in the wilderness, for the land of Canaan, by a trial of afflicting dispensations, which Caleb and Joshua bearing strenuously, were declared suitable to enter the promised land, as having followed the Lord fully; while others being tried out with them, their carcasses fell in the wilderness; so He makes trial of men for heaven, by the crook in their lot. If one can stand that test, he is manifested to be a saint, a sincere servant of God, as Job was proved to be; if not, he is but a hypocrite; he cannot stand the test of the crook in his lot, but goes away like dross in God's furnace.

A melancholy instance of which we have in that man of honor and wealth, who, with high pretences of religion, arising from a principle of moral seriousness, addressed himself to our Savior, to know "what he should do that he might inherit eternal life." Our Savior, to discover the man to himself, makes a crook in his lot, where all along before it had stood even, obliging him, by a probatory command, to sell and give away all that he had, and follow Him: "Sell whatever you have, and give to the poor, and come, take up the cross and follow Me.

" By this means he was at that moment, in the court of conscience, stripped of his great possession; so that from that time forward he could no longer keep them with a good conscience, as he might have done before. The man instantly felt the smart of this crook made in his lot; "he was sad at that saying;" that is, immediately upon the hearing of it, being struck with pain, disorder, and confusion of mind, his countenance changed, became cloudy and lowering, as the same word is used.

He could not stand the test of that crook; he could by no means submit his lot to God in that point, but behoved to have it, at any rate, according to his own mind. So he "went away grieved, for he had great possessions." He went away from Christ back to his plentiful estate, and though with a pained and sorrowful heart, sat him down again on it a violent possessor before the Lord, thwarting the Divine order. And there is no appearance that ever this order was revoked, or that ever he came to a better temper in reference to it.

Secondly, excitation to duty, weaning one from this world, and prompting him to look after the happiness of the other world. Many have been beholden to the crook in their lot, for that ever they came to themselves, settled, and turned serious. Going for a time like a wild ass used to the wilderness, scorning to be turned, their foot has slid in due time; and a crook being by that means made in their lot, their mouth has come wherein they have been caught. Thus was the prodigal brought to himself, and obliged to entertain thoughts of returning to his father. The crook in their lot convinces them at length that their rest is not here. Finding still a pricking thorn of uneasiness, whenever they lay down their head where they would fain take rest in the creature, and that they are obliged to lift it again, they are brought to conclude there is no hope from that quarter, and begin to cast about for rest another way, so it makes them errands to God, which they did not have before; forasmuch as they feel a need of the comforts of the other world, to which their mouths were out of taste while their lot stood even to their mind. Wherefore, whatever use we make of the crook in our lot, the voice of it is, "Arise and depart, this is not your rest." And it is surely that which of all means of mortification, of the afflictive king, most deadens a real Christian to this life and world.

Thirdly, conviction of sin. As when one walking heedlessly is suddenly taken ill of a lameness: his going halting the rest of his way convinces him of having made a wrong step;

and every new painful step brings it afresh to his mind. So God makes a crook in one's lot, to convince him of some false step he has made, or course he has taken. What the sinner would otherwise be apt to overlook, forget, or think light of, is by this means recalled to mind, set before him as an evil and bitter thing, and kept in remembrance, that his heart may every now and then bleed for it afresh. Thus, by the crook, men's sin finds them out to their conviction, "as the thief is ashamed when he is found." The which Joseph's brothers feelingly express, under the crook made in their lot in Egypt: "we are verily guilty concerning our brother;" "God has found out the iniquity of your servants." The crook in the lot usually in its nature of circumstances, so naturally refers to the false step or course, that it serves for a providential memorial of it, bringing the sin, though of an old date, fresh to remembrance, and for a badge of the sinner's folly, in word or deed, to keep it ever before him. When Jacob found Leah, through Laban's unfair

dealing, palmed on him for Rachel, how could he miss of a stinging remembrance of the cheat he had, seven years at least before, put on his own father, pretending himself to be Esau? How could it miss of galling him occasionally afterwards during the course of the marriage? He had imposed on his father the younger brother for the elder; and Laban imposed on him the elder sister for the younger. The dimness of Isaac's eyes favoured the former cheat; and the darkness of the evening did as much favor the latter. So he behoved to say, as Adoni-bezek in another case, "As I have done, so God has requited me. " In like manner, Rachel, dying in childbirth, could hardly avoid a melancholy reflection on her rash and passionate expression, "Give me children, or else I die. " Even holy Job read, in the crook in his lot, some false steps he had made in his youth, many years before: "You write bitter things against me, and make me possess the iniquities of my youth. "

Fourthly, correction, or punishment, for sin. In nothing more than in the crook of the lot is that word verified, "Your own wickedness shall correct you, and your backslidings shall reprove you. " God may, for a time, wink at one's sin which afterward he will set a brand of his indignation upon, in crooking the sinner's lot, as he did in the case of Jacob, and of Rachel, mentioned before. Though the sin was a passing action, or a course of no long continuance, the mark of the Divine displeasure for it, set on the sinner in the crook of his lot, may pain him long and sore, that by repeated experience he may know what an evil and bitter thing it was. David's killing Uriah by the sword of the Ammonites was soon over; but for that cause "the sword never departed from his house." Gehazi quickly obtained two bags of money from Naaman, in the way of falsehood and lying; but as a lasting mark of the Divine indignation against the profane trick, he got withal a leprosy which craved to him while he lived, and to his posterity after him. This may be the case, as well where the sin is pardoned as to the guilt of eternal wrath, as where it is not. And one may have confessed and sincerely repented of that sin, which yet shall make him go halting to the grave, though it cannot carry him to hell. A man's person may be accepted in the Beloved, who yet has a particular badge of the Divine displeasure, with his sin hung on him in the crook of his lot. "You were a God that forgave them, though you took vengeance on their inventions. "

Fifthly, preventing of sin. "I will hedge up your way with thorns, and make a wall that she shall not find her paths. " The crook in the lot will readily be found to lie cross to some wrong bias of the heart, which peculiarly sways with the party; so it is like a thorn-hedge or wall in the way which that bias inclines him to. The defiling objects in the world specially take and prove ensnaring, as they are suited to the particular cast of temper in men; but by means of the crook in the lot, the paint and varnish is worn off the defiling object, by which it loses its former taking appearance. Thus, the edge of corrupt affections is blunted, temptation weakened, and much sin prevented; the sinner, after "gadding about so much to change his way, resuming ashamed " Thus the Lord crooks one's lot that "he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from men;" and so "he keeps back his soul from the pit. " Every one knows what is most pleasant to him; but God alone knows what is most profitable. As all men are liars, so all men are fools too. He is the only wise God. Many are obliged to the crook in their lot, that they do not go to those excesses which their vain minds and corrupt affections would with full sail carry them to; and they would from their hearts bless God for making it, if they did but calmly consider what would most likely be the issue of the removal of it. When one is in hazard of fretting under the hardship of bearing the crook, he would do well to consider what condition he is as yet in to bear its removal in a Christian manner.

Sixthly, discovery of latent corruption, whether in saints or sinners. There are some corruptions in every man's heart, which lie, as it were, so near the surface, that they are ready on every turn to rise up; but then there are others also which lie so very deep, that they are scarcely observed at all. But as the fire under

the pot makes the scum rise up, appear on top, and run over; so the crook in the lot raises up from the bottom, and brings out such corruption as otherwise one could hardly imagine to be within. Who would have suspected such strength of passion in the meek Moses as he discovered at the waters at strife, and for which he was kept out of Canaan? Or so much bitterness of spirit in the patient Job, as to charge God with becoming cruel to Him? So much ill-nature in the good Jeremiah, as to curse not only the day of his birth, but even the man who brought tidings of it to his father? Or such a tang of atheism is Asaph, as to pronounce religion a vain thing? But the crook in the lot, bringing out these things, showed them to have been within, how long so-ever they had lurked unobserved. And as this design, however indecently proud scoffers allow themselves to treat it, is in no way inconsistent with the Divine perfections; so the discovery itself is necessary for the due humiliation of sinners, and to stain the pride of all glory, that men may know themselves. Both which appear, in that it was on this very design that God made the long-continued crook in Israel's lot in the wilderness; even to humble them and prove them, to know what was in their heart.

Seventhly, the exercise of grace in the children of God. Believers, through the remains of indwelling corruption, are liable to fits of spiritual laziness and inactivity, in which their graces lie dormant for the time. Besides, there are some graces which of their own nature are but occasional in their exercise, as being exercised only upon occasion of certain things which they have a necessary relation to, such as patience and long-suffering. Now, the crook in the lot serves to rouse up a Christian to the exercise of the graces, overpowered by corruption, and withal to call forth to action the occasional graces, ministering proper occasions for them.

The truth is, the crook in the lot is the great engine of Providence for making men appear in their true colours, discovering both their ill and their good. And if the grace of God is in them, it will bring it out, and cause it to display itself. It so puts the Christian to his shifts, that however it makes him stagger for awhile, yet it will at length evidence both the reality and the strength of grace in him. "You are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, may be found unto praise.

" The crook in the lot gives rise to many acts of faith, hope, love, self-denial, resignation, and other graces; to many heavenly breathings, partings, and groanings, which otherwise would not be brought forth. And I make no question but these things, however by carnal men despised as trifling, are more precious in the sight of God than even believers themselves are aware of, being acts of immediate internal worship; and will have a surprising notice taken of them, and of the sum of them, at long run.

However it may be the persons themselves often can hardly think them worth their own notice at all. The steady routing of a gallant army or horse and foot to the routing of the enemy is highly prized; but the acting of holy fear and humble hope is in reality far more valuable, as being so in the sight of God, whose judgment, we are sure, is according to truth. This the Psalmist teaches: "He delights not in the strength of the horse; He takes not pleasure in the legs of a man.

The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy." And indeed the exercise of the graces of his Spirit in his people is so very precious in His sight, that whatever grace any of them excel in, they will readily get such a crook made in their lot as will be a special trial of it, that will make a proof of its full strength. Abraham excelled in the grace of faith, in trusting God's bare word of promise above the dictates of sense; and God, giving him a promise that he would make of him a great nation, made withal a crook in his lot, by which he had enough ado with all the strength of his faith; while he was obliged to leave his country and kindred, and sojourn among the Canaanites; his wife continuing barren,

till past the age of child-bearing; and when she had at length brought forth Isaac, and he was grown up, he was called to offer him up for a burnt-offering, the more exquisite trial of his faith, that Ishmael was now expelled his family, and that it was declared, that in Isaac only his seed should be called.

"Moses was very meek above all the men which were on the face of the earth." And he was entrusted with the conduct of a most perverse and unmanageable people, the crook in his lot plainly designed for the exercise of his meekness. Job excelled in patience, and by the crook in his lot, he got as much to do with it. For God gives none of his people to excel in a gift, but some time or other he will afford them use for the whole compass of it.

Now, the use of this doctrine is threefold. (1.) For reproof. (2.) For consolation. And (3.) for exhortation.

Use 1. For reproof. And it meets with three sorts of persons as reprovably.

First, The carnal and earthly, who do not with awe and reverence regard the crook in their lot as of God's making. There is certainly a signature of the Divine hand on it to be perceived by just observers; and that challenges an awful regard, the neglect of which forebodes destruction. "Because they do not regard the works of the Lord, nor the operation of His hands, He shall destroy them, and not build them up. " And in that they are deeply guilty, who, pouring on second causes, and looking no further than the unhappy instruments of the crook in their lot, overlook the first cause; as a dog snarls at the stone, but does not look to the hand that casts it.

This is, in effect, to make a God of the creature; so regarding it, as if it could of itself effect anything, while in the mean time it is but an instrument in the hand of God, "the rod of His anger. " "Ordained of Him for judgment, established for correction. " Oh! Why should men terminate their view on the instruments of the crook in their lot, and so magnify their scourges? The truth is, they are, for the most part, rather to be pitied, as having an undesirable office, which for their gratifying their own corrupt affections, in making the crook in the lot of others, returns on their own head at length with a vengeance, as did "the blood of Jezreel on the house of Jehu.

" And it is specially undesirable to be so employed in the case of such as belong to God; for rarely is the ground of the quarrel the same on the part of the instrument as on God's part, but very different; witness Shimei's cursing David as a bloody man, meaning the blood of the house of Saul, which he was not guilty of, while God meant it of the blood of Uriah, which he could not deny. Moreover, the quarrel will be, at length, taken up between God and His people; and then their scourgers will find they had but a thankless office.

"I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction, " says God, in resentment of the heathen crooking the lot of His people. In like manner are they guilty who impute the crook in their lot to fortune, or their ill-luck, which in very deed is nothing but a creature of imagination, framed for a blind to keep man from acknowledging the hand of God. Thus, what the Philistines doubted, they do more impiously determine, saying, in effect, "It is not His hand that smote us, it was a chance that happened to us.

" And, finally, those also are guilty, who, in the way of giving up themselves to despise the crook in their lot, to make nothing of it, and to forget it. I question not, but one committing his case to the Lord, and looking to Him for remedy, in the first place, may lawfully call in the moderate use of the comforts of life for help in the second place. But as for that course so frequent and usual in this case among carnal men, if

the crook of the lot really is, as indeed it is, of God's making, it must needs be a most indecent, unbecoming course, to be abhorred of all good men.

'My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord.'" It is surely a very desperate method of cure, which cannot miss of issuing in something worse than the disease, however it may palliate it for awhile. "In that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping and to mourning, and behold joy and gladness, eating flesh and drinking wine: and it was revealed in my ears, by the Lord of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till you die. "

Secondly, the unsubmissive, whose hearts, like the troubled sea, swell and boil fret and murmur, and cannot be at rest under the crook in their lot. This is a most sinful and dangerous course. The apostle Jude, characterising some, "to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever, " says of them, "these are murmurers, complainers," namely, still complaining of their lot, which is the import of the word here used by the Holy Ghost. For, since the crook in their lot, which their unsubdued spirits can by no means submit to, is of God's making, this their practice must needs be a fighting against God. And these their complainings and murmurings are indeed against Him, whatever face they put on them. Thus when the Israelites murmur against Moses, God charges them with murmuring against Himself. "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmured against Me? " Ah! May not He who made and fashioned us without our advice, be allowed to make our lot too, without asking our mind, but we must rise up against Him on account of the crook made in it? What does this speak, but that the proud creature cannot endure God's work, nor bear what He has done? And how black and dangerous is that temper of spirit! How is it possible to miss of being broken to pieces in such a course? "He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who has hardened himself against him and has prospered? "

Thirdly, the careless and unfruitful, who do not set themselves dutifully to comply with the design of the crook in their lot. God and nature do nothing in vain. Since he makes the crook, there is, doubtless, a becoming design in it, which we are obliged in duty to fall in with, according to that, "Hear the rod. " And, indeed, if one did not shut his own eyes, but is willing to understand, he may easily perceive the general design of it to be, to wean him from this world, and move him to seek and take up his heart's rest in God. And nature and the circumstances of the crook itself being duly considered, it will not be very hard make to a more particular discovery of the design of it. But, alas! the careless sinner, sunk in spiritual sloth and stupidity, is in no concern to discover the design of Providence in the crook; so he cannot fall in with it, but remains unfruitful; and all the pains taken on him by the great Husbandman in the dispensation are lost. ' They cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty;" groaning under the pressure of the crook itself, and weight of the hand of the instrument of it: "But none said, What is God my Maker?" they look not, they turn not to God.

Use 2. For consolation. It speaks comfort to the afflicted children of God. Whatever is the crook in your lot, it is of God's making; and therefore you may look upon it kindly. Since it is your Father who has made it for you, question not but there is a favourable design in it towards you. A discreet child welcomes his father's rod, knowing that, being a father, he seeks his benefit in this way; and shall not God's children welcome the crook in their lot, as designed by their Father, who cannot mistake His measures, to work for their good, according to the promise? The truth is, the crook in the lot of a believer, how painful it proves, is a part of the discipline of the covenant, the nurture secured to Christ's children by the promise of the Father. "If His children forsake My law, and do not walk in My judgments, then I will visit their transgressions with the rod." Furthermore, all who are disposed to betake themselves to God, under the crook in their lot may take comfort in this, let them know that there is no crook in their lot but they may be made straight; for God

made it, surely then He can mend it. He himself can make straight what He has made crooked, though none other can. There is nothing too hard for Him to do: "He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the dung-hill; that he may set him with princes. He makes the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. " Do not say that your crook has been of so long continuance, that it will never mend. Put it in the hand of God, who made it, that He may mend it, and wait on Him. And if it is for your good that it should be mended, it shall be mended; for "no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly. "

Use 3. For exhortation. Since the crook in the lot is of God's making, then, eyeing the hand of God in yours, be reconciled to it, and submit under it whatever it is. I say, eyeing the hand of God in it, for otherwise your submission under the crook in your lot cannot be a Christian submission, acceptable to God, having no reference to Him as your party in the matter.

Object. 1. But some will say, 'The crook in my lot is from the hand of the creature; and such a one too as I deserted no such treatment from.'

Ans. From what has been already said, it appears that, although the crook in your lot is indeed immediately from the creature's hand, yet it is mediately from the hand of God; being nothing of that kind, no penal evil, but the Lord has done it. Therefore without all peradventure, God Himself is the principal party, whoever is the less principal. And although you have not deserved your crook at the hand of the instrument which He makes use of for your correction, you certainly deserve it at His hand; and He may make use of what instrument He will in the matter, or may do it immediately by Himself, even as seems good in His sight.

Object. II. "But the crook in my lot might quickly be evened, if the instrument or instruments of it pleased: only there is no dealing with them, so as to convince them of their fault in making it."

Ans. If it is so, be sure God's time is not as yet come that the clock should be made even; for if it were come, though they stand now like an impregnable fort, they would give way like a sandy bank under one's foot; "they would bow down to you with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of your feet. " Meanwhile, that state of the matter is so far from justifying one's not eyeing the hand of God in the crook in the lot, that it makes a piece trial in which His hand very eminently appears, namely, that men should be signally injurious and burdensome to others, yet by no means susceptible of conviction. This was the trial of the church from her adversaries. "All that found them have devoured them; and their adversaries said, We do not offend: because they have sinned against the Lord, the habitation of justice. " They were very abusive, and gave her barbarous usage; yet would they own no fault in the matter. How could they ward off the conviction? Were they verily blameless in their devouring the Lord's straying sheep? No, surely, they were not. Did they look on themselves as ministers of the Divine justice against her? No, they did not.

Some indeed would make a question here, How the adversaries of the church could celebrate her God as the habitation of justice? But the original pointing of the text being retained, it appears that there is no ground at all for this question here, and withal the whole matter is set in a clear light. "All that found them have devoured them; and their adversaries said, We do not offend: because they have sinned against the Lord, the habitation of justice. " These last are not the words of the adversaries, but the words of the prophet showing how it came to pass that the adversaries devoured the Lord's sheep, as they lighted on them, and withal stood to the defence of it, when they had done, far from acknowledging any wrong; the matter lay here, the sheep had sinned against the Lord, the habitation of justice; and, as a just punishment

of this from His hand, they could have no justice at the hand of their adversaries.

Wherefore, laying aside these frivolous pretences, and eyeing the hand of God, as that which has bowed their lot in that part, and keeps it in the bow, be reconciled to and submit under the crook, whatever it is, saying from the heart, "Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it. " And to move you to this consider,

1. It is a duty you owe to God, as your sovereign Lord and Benefactor. His sovereignty challenges our submission, and it can in no case be meanness of spirit to submit to the crook which His hand has made in our lot, and to go quietly under the yoke that He has laid on; but it is really madness for the potsherds of the earth, by their turbulent and refractory carriage under it, to strive with their Maker. And His beneficence to us, ill-deserving creatures, may well stop our mouth from complaining of His making a crook in our lot, who would have done us no wrong had He made the wh

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Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/thomas-boston/the-crook-in-the-lot-part-1/>

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