

The Crook in the Lot - Part 2

by Thomas Boston

The sermon teaches believers to manage the crook in their lot by praying, humbling themselves, and waiting patiently on God, and to consider the crook as the work of God for holy and wise ends.

Scripture: Psalm 138:6, Proverbs 16:19, Proverbs 22:4, Isaiah 57:15, Matthew 23:12, Luke 14:11, Philippians 2:3, James 4:10, 1 Peter 5:6

Topics: "Humility", "Gods Providence"

Description

Thomas Boston preaches about the importance of humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God, emphasizing the need to submit to God's providence and accept our circumstances with humility. He contrasts the outcomes of being humble and proud, highlighting how humility leads to peace of mind, favor with God, and eventual exaltation by Him. Boston urges believers to focus on cultivating a spirit of humility, trusting that God will lift them up in His perfect timing.

Transcript

Directions for rightly managing the application for removing the crook in the lot.

1. Pray for it, and pray in faith, believing that, for the sake of Jesus, you shall certainly obtain at length, and in this life too, if it is good for you; but without peradventure in the life to come. They will not be disappointed that get the song of Moses and of the Lamb. And, in some cases of that nature, extraordinary prayer, with fasting, is very expedient.
2. Humble yourselves under it, as the yoke which the sovereign hand has laid on you. "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him." &c. Justify God, condemn yourselves, kiss the rod, and go quietly under it; this is the most feasible way to get rid of it, the end being obtained. "You will prepare your hearts, you will cause your ear to hear. "
3. Wait on patiently till the hand that made it mend it. Do not give up the matter as hopeless, because you are not so soon relieved as you would wish; "But let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. " Leave the timing of the deliverance to the Lord; His time will at length, to conviction, appear the best, and it will not go beyond it. "I, the Lord, will hasten it in his time. " Waiting on Him you will not be disappointed; "For they shall not be ashamed that wait for Me. "

Exhortation 2. What crook there is, which in the settled order of things cannot be removed or evened in this world, let us apply to God for suitable relief under it. For instance, the common crook in the lot of saints, namely, indwelling sin; as God has made that crook not to be removed here He can certainly balance it, and afford relief under it. The same is to be said of any crook, while it remains unremoved. In such cases apply yourself to God, for making up your losses another way. And there are five things I would have you to keep in view and aim at here.

1. To take God in Christ for and instead of that thing, the withholding or taking away of which from you makes the crook in your lot. There is never a crook which God makes in our lot, but it is in effect Heaven's offer of a blessed exchange to us; such as, "Sell whatever you have, - and you shall have treasure in heaven." In managing of which exchange, God first puts out His hand, and takes away some earthly thing from us; and it is expected we put out our hand next, and take some heavenly thing from Him in the stead of it, and particularly His Christ. Wherefore has God emptied your left hand of such and such an earthly comfort? Stretch out your right hand to God in Christ, take Him in the room of it, and welcome. Therefore the soul's closing with Christ is called buying, wherein parting with one thing, we get another in its stead. "the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it. " Do this, and you will be more than even hands with the crook in your lot.

2. Look for the stream running as full from Him as ever it did or could run, when the crook of the lot has dried it. This is the work of faith, confidently to depend on God for that which is denied us from the creature. "When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up. " This is a most rational expectation: for it is certain there is no good in the creature but what is from God; therefore there is no good to be found in the creature, the stream, but what may be got immediately from God, the fountain. And it is a welcome plea, to come to God and say, Now, Lord, You have taken away from me such a creature-comfort, I must have as good from Yourself.

3. Seek for the spiritual fruits of the crook in the lot. We see the way in the world is, when one trade fails, to fall on and drive another trade; so should we, when there is a crook in the lot, making our earthly comforts low, set ourselves the more for spiritual attainments. If our trade with the world sinks, let us see to drive a trade with heaven more vigorously; see, if by means of the crook, we can obtain more faith, love, heavenly-mindedness, contempt of the world, humility, self-denial, &c. So while we lose at one hand we shall gain another.

4. Grace to bear us up under the crook. " For this thing I besought to the Lord thrice;" and He said, "My grace is sufficient for you. " Whether a man is faint, and have a light burden, or is refreshed and strengthened, and have a heavy one, it is all the same; the latter can go as easy under his burden as the former under his. Grace proportioned to the trial is what we should aim at; getting that, though the crook is not evened, we are even hands with it.

5. The keeping in our eye the eternal rest and weight of glory in the other world. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." This will balance the crook in your lot, be what it will; while they who have no well-grounded hope of salvation will find the crook in their lot in this world such a weight, as they have nothing to counterbalance it. But the hope of eternal rest may bear up under all the toil and trouble met with here.

Exhortation 3. Let us then set ourselves rightly to bear the crook in our lot, while God sees fit to continue it. What we cannot mend, let us bear Christianly, and not fight against God, and so kick against the pricks. So let us bear it.

1. Patiently, without fuming and fretting, or murmuring. Though we lose our comforts in the creature through the crook in our lot, let us not lose the possession of ourselves. The crook in our lot makes us like one who has but a scanty fire to warm at: but impatience under it scatters it, so as to set the house on fire about us, and expose us to danger. "He that has no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down and without walls. "

2. With Christian fortitude, without sinking under discouragement, - "nor faint when you are rebuked of Him." Satan's work is by the crook, either to bend or break people's spirits, and oftentimes by bending to break them. Our work is to carry evenly under it, steering a middle course, guarding against splitting on the rocks on either hand. Our happiness lies not in any earthly comfort, nor will the want of any of them render us miserable. So that we are resolutely to hold on our way with a holy contempt and regardlessness of hardships. "The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger."

Quest. "When may any one be reckoned to fall under sinking discouragement from the crook in his lot?"

Ans. When it prevails so far as to unfit us for the duties either of our particular or Christian calling. We may be sure it has carried us beyond the bounds of moderate grief, when it unfits us for the common affairs of life, which the Lord calls us to manage. Or for the duties of religion, hindering them altogether, "That your prayers are not hindered, " (Greek, cut off, or cut up, like a tree from the roots), or making one quite hopeless in them.

3 Let us bear it profitably, so we may gain some advantage by that means. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn your statutes. " There is an advantage to be made by it. And it is certainly an ill-managed crook in our lot, when we get not some spiritual good of it. The crook is a kind of spiritual medicine, and as it is lost physic that purges away no ill humours, in vain are its unpleasantness to the taste and its gripings endured; so it is a lost crook, and ill is the bitterness of it borne, if we are not bettered by it. "By this, therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit, to take away his sin. "

Motives to press this exhortation.

Motive 1. There will be no evening of it while God sees fit to continue it. Let us behave under it as we will, and make what sallies we please in the case, it will continue immovable, as fixed with bands of iron and brass. "But He is of 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. " Is it not wisdom then to make the best we may of what we cannot mend? Make a virtue then of necessity. What is not to be cured must be endured, and should be with a Christian resignation.

Motive 2. An awkward carriage under it notably increases the pain of it. What makes the yoke gall our necks, but that we struggle so much against it, and cannot let it sit at ease on us. How often are we, in that case, like men dashing their heads against a rock to remove it! The rock stands unmoved, but they are wounded, and lose exceedingly by their struggle. Impatience under the crook lays an overweight on the burden, and makes it heavier, while withal it weakens us, and makes us less able to bear it.

Motive 3. The crook in your lot is the special trial God has chosen for you to take your measure by. It is God's fire, by which He tries what metal men are made of: Heaven's touchstone for discovering true and counterfeit Christians. They may bear and go through several trials, whom the crook in the lot will discover to be naught, because by no means they can bear that. Think then with yourself under it,--Now, here the trial of my state turns; I must, by this, be proved either sincere or a hypocrite; for, can any be a cordial subject of Christ, without being able to submit his lot to Him? Do not all who sincerely come to Christ, put a blank in His hand? And does He not tell us, that without that disposition we are not His disciples? "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. " Perhaps you will find you can submit to anything but that: but will not that but mar all? Did ever any hear of a sincere closing with Christ with a reserve or exception of one thing, in which they behaved to be their own lords?

Quest. "Is that disposition then a qualification necessarily pre-required to our believing, and if so, where must we have it? Can we work it out of our natural powers? "

Ans. No, it is not so; but it necessarily accompanies and goes along with believing, flowing from the same saving illumination in the knowledge of Christ, by which the soul is brought to believe on Him. By this means the soul sees Him an able Savior, and so trusts on Him for salvation; the rightful Lord and infinitely wise Ruler, and so submits the lot to Him. The soul taking Him for a Savior, takes Him also for a head and ruler. It is Christ's giving Himself to us, and our receiving Him, that causes us to quit other things to and for Him, as it is the light that dispels the darkness.

Case. "Alas! I cannot get my heart freely to submit my lot to Him in that point."

Ans. 1. That submission will not be carried on in any without a struggle; the old man will never submit to it, and when the new man of grace is submitting to it, the old man will still be rebelling. "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. And these are contrary, the one to the other, so that you cannot do the things that you would. " But are you sincerely desirous and habitually aiming to submit to it? From the ungracious struggle against the crook, turn away to the struggle with your own heart to bring it to submit, believing the promise, and using the means for it, being grieved from the heart with yourself that you cannot submit to it. This is submitting of your lot, in the favourable construction of the gospel. If you had your choice, would you rather have your heart brought to submit to the crook, than the crook evened to your heart's desire? And do you not sincerely endeavor to submit, notwithstanding the reluctance of the flesh?

Ans. 2. Where is the Christian self-denial and taking up the cross, without submitting to the crook? This is the first lesson Christ puts in the hands of His disciples. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. " Self-denial would procure a reconciliation with the crook, and an admittance of the cross. But while we cannot bear our corrupt self to be denied any of its cravings, and particularly that which God sees fit especially to be denied, we cannot bear the crook in our lot, but fight against it in favor of self.

Ans. 3. Where is our conformity to Christ, while we cannot submit to the crook? We cannot evidence ourselves Christians, without conformity to Christ. "He that says he abides in Him, ought himself, also so to walk, even as He walked." There was a continued crook in Christ's lot, but He submitted to it. "And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. " "For even Christ pleased not Himself. " &c. And so must we, if we will prove ourselves

Christians indeed.

Ans. 4. How shall we prove ourselves the genuine kindly children of God, if still warring with the crook? We cannot pray, Our Father,--Your will be done on earth as, &c. Nay, the language of that practice is, We must have our own will, and God's will cannot satisfy us.

Motive 4. The trial by the crook here will not last long. What though the work is sore, it may be me better comported with that it will not be lonesome; a few days or years at farthest will put an end to it, and take you off your trials. Do not say, I shall be eased of it; for, if not eased before, you will be eased of it at death, come after it what will. A serious view of death and eternity might make us set ourselves to behave rightly under our crook while it lasts.

Motive 5. If you would, in a Christian manner, set yourselves to bear the crook, you would find it easier than you imagine. "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, and you shall find rest to your souls; for My yoke is easy, and My burden is light. " Satan has no readier way to gain his purpose than to persuade men it is impossible that ever their minds should ply with the crook; that it is a burden to them altogether insupportable; as long as you believe that, be sure you will never be able to bear it. But the Lord makes no crook in the lot of any, but what may be borne of them acceptably, though not sinlessly and perfectly. For there is strength for that effect secured in the covenant, and being by faith fetched, it will certainly come.

Motive 6. If you behave Christianly under your crook here, you will not lose your labor, but get a full reward of grace in the other world, through Christ. There is a blessing pronounced on him that endures on this very ground, "Blessed is the man that endures temptation; for, when he is tried, he shall receive the crown, which the Lord has promised to them that love Him. " Heaven is the place into which the approved, upon the trial of the crook, are received. "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. " When you come there, no vestiges of it will be remaining in your lot, nor will you have the least uneasy remembrance of it; but it will accent your praises, and increase your joy.

Motive 7. If you do not behave Christianly under it, you will lose your souls in the other world. Those who are at war with God in their lot here, God will have war with them forever. If they will not submit to His yoke here, and go quietly under it, He will wreath His yoke about their neck forever, with everlasting bonds that shall never be loosed. Therefore, set yourselves to behave rightly under the crook in your lot.

If you ask what way one may reach that; for direction we propose, -

Prop III. The considering the crook in the lot as the work of God is a proper means to bring one to behave rightly under it.

1. What it is to consider the crook as the work of God. We take it up in these five things

First, An inquiry into the spring from where it rises. Reason and religion both teach us, not only to notice the crook, which we cannot avoid, but to consider and inquire into the spring of it. Surely it is not our choice, nor do we designedly make it for ourselves; and to ascribe it to fortune is to ascribe it to nothing. It is not sprung of itself, but sown by one hand or another for us. And we are to notice the hand from which it comes.

Secondly, A perceiving of the hand of God in it. Whatever hand any creatures have in there, we ought not to terminate our view in them, but look above and beyond them to the supreme manager's agency.

Without this we shall make a God of the creature that is instrumental of the crook, looking on it as if it were the first cause, which is peculiar to God, and bring ourselves under the doom, "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."

Thirdly, A representing it to ourselves as a work of God, which He has wrought against us for holy and wise ends, becoming the Divine perfections. This is to take it by the right handle, to represent it to ourselves under a right notion, from where a right management under it may spring. It can never be safe to overlook God in it, but very safe to overlook the creature; ascribing it to God, as if no other hand were in it, His being always the principal in it: "It is the Lord: let Him do what seems Him good. " Thus David overlooked Shimei, and looked to God in the matter of his cursing, as one fixing his eyes, not on the axe, but on him that welded it. Here two things are to come into our consideration.

1st. The degree of God, purposing that crook for us from eternity; "for He works all things after the counsel of His own will, " the sealed book, in which are written all the black lines that made the crook. Whatever valleys of darkness, grief, and sorrow we are carried through, we are to look on Hem as made by the mountains of brass, the immovable Divine purposes. This can be no presumption in that case, if we carry it no further than the event goes in our sight and feeling. For so far the book is opened for us to look into.

2ndly. The providence of God bringing to pass that crook for us in time. There is nothing can befall us without Him in whom we live. Whatever kind of agency of the creatures may be in the making of our crook, whatever they have done or not done towards it, He is the spring that sets all the created wheels in motion, which ceasing, they would all stop: though He is still infinitely pure in His agency, however impure they are in theirs. Job considered both these.

Fourthly, A continuing in me thought of it as such. It is not a simple glance of the eye, but a contemplating and leisurely viewing of it as His work, that is the proper mean. We are to be,

1st. Habitually impressed with this consideration: as the crook is some lasting grievance, so the consideration of this as the remedy should be habitually kept up. There are other considerations besides this that we must entertain, so that we cannot always have it expressly in our mind: but we must lay it down for a rooted principle, according to which we are to manage the crook, and keep the heart in a disposition, by which it may expressly slip into our minds, as occasion calls.

2ndly. We are to be occasionally exercised in it. Whenever we begin to feel the smart of the crook, we should fetch in this remedy; when the yoke begins to gad the neck, there should be an application of this spiritual ointment. And however often the former comes in on us, it will be our wisdom to fetch in the latter as me proper remedy; the oftener it is used, it will more easily come to hand, and also be the more effectual.

Fifthly, A considering it for me end for which it is proposed to us, namely, to bring us to a dutiful carriage under it. Men's corruptions will cause them to enter on the consideration of it; but as the principle is, so the end and effect of it will be, corrupt. But we must enter on and use it for a good end, if we would have good of it, taking it as a practical consideration for regulating our conduct under the crook.

II. How it is to be understood to be a proper means to bring one to behave rightly under the crook.

Not as if it were sufficient of itself, and as it stands alone, to produce that effect. But as it is used in faith, in the faith of the Gospel; that is to say, a sinner's bare considering the crook in his lot as the work of God, without any saving relation to Him, will never be a way to behave himself rightly under it. But having believed in Jesus Christ, and so taking God for his God, the considering of the crook of the work of God, his God, is the proper means to bring him to that desirable temper and behavior. Many hearers mistake here. When they hear such and such lawful considerations proposed for bringing them to duty, they presently imagine that by the mere force of them, they may gain the point. And many preachers too, who, forgetting Christ and the Gospel, pretend by the force of reason to make men Christians; the eyes of both being held, that they do not see the corruption of men's nature, which is such as sets the true cure above the force of reason; all that they are sensible of being some ill habits, which they think may be shaken off by a vigorous application of their rational faculties. To clear this matter, consider,--

First, Is it rational to think to set fallen man, with his corrupted nature, to work the same way with innocent Adam? That is, to set beggars on a level with the rich, lame men to a journey with those that have limbs. Innocent Adam had a stock of gracious abilities, by which he might, by the force of moral considerations, have brought himself to perform duty aright. But where is that with us? Whatever force is in them to a soul endowed with spiritual life, what power have they to raise the dead, such as we are?

Secondly, The Scripture is very plain on this head, showing the indispensable necessity of faith; and that, such as unites to Christ, "Without Me," that is, separate from Me, "you can do nothing;" no, not with all th

e moral considerations you can use. How were the ten commandments given on Mount Sinai? Not as bare exactions of duty, but fronted with the Gospel, to be believed in the first place; "I am the Lord your God, " &c. And so Solomon, whom many regard rather as a moral philosopher than an inspired writer leading to Christ, fronts his writings, in the beginning of the Proverbs, with most express gospel. And must we have it expressly repeated in our Bibles with every moral precept, or else shut our eyes and take these precepts without it? That is the effect of our natural enmity to Christ. If we loved Him more, we should see Him more in every page and in every command, receiving the law at His mouth.

Thirdly, Do but consider what it is to behave rightly under the crook in the lot; what humiliation of soul, self-denial, and absolute resignation to the win of God must be in it. What love to God it must proceed from; how regard to His glory must influence it as the chief end of it; and try and see if it is not impossible for you to reach it without that faith before mentioned. I know a Christian may reach it without full assurance. But still, according to the measure of their persuasion that God is their God, so will their attainments in it be; these keep equal pace. Oh! what kind of hearts do they imagine themselves to have, what think they can for a moment empty them of the creature further than they can fill them with a God as their God in its room and stead? No doubt men may, from the force of moral considerations, work themselves to a behavior under the crook externally right, such as many pagans had; but a Christian disposition of spirit under it will never be reached without that faith in God.

Object. "Then it is saints only that are capable of the improvement of that consideration."

Ans. Yea, indeed it is so, as to that and all other moral considerations, for true Christian ends: and that amounts to no more than that directions for walking rightly are only for the living that have the use of their limbs; and, therefore, that you may improve it, set yourselves to believe in the first place.

III. I shall confirm that it is a proper mean to bring one to behave rightly under it. This will appear, if we consider these four things.

1. It is of great use to divert from the considering and dwelling on those things about the crook which serve to irritate our corruption. Such are the balking of our will and wishes, the satisfaction we should have in the matter's going according to our mind, the instruments of the crook, how injurious they are to us, how unreasonable, how obstinate, &c. The dwelling on these considerations is but the blowing of the fire within; but to turn our eyes to it as the work of God would be a cure by way of diversion; and such diversion of the thoughts is not only lawful, but expedient and necessary.

2. It has a moral aptitude for producing this good effect. Though our cure is not compassed by the mere force of reason, yet it is carried on not by a brutal movement, but in a rational way. This consideration has a moral efficacy on our reason, it is fit to awe us into a submission, and ministers a deal of argument for behaving Christianly under our crook.

3. It has a Divine appointment for that end, which is to be believed. So the text. The creature in itself is an inefficacious and moveless thing, a mere vanity. That which makes anything a means, fit for the end is a word of Divine appointment. To use anything then for an end, without the faith of this, is to make a god of the creature; therefore it is to be used in a dependence on God, according to that word of appointment. And everything is fit for the end for which God has appointed it. This consideration is appointed for that end; and therefore is a fit means for it.

4. The Spirit may be expected to work by it, and does work by it, in them that believe, and look to him for it, forasmuch as it is a mean of his own appointment. Papists, legalists, and all superstitious persons devise various means of sanctification, seeming to have, or really having a moral fitness for the same; but they are quite ineffectual, because, like Abana, and Pharpar, they want a word of Divine appointment for curing us of our leprosy; therefore the Spirit works not by them, since they are not His instruments, but devised of their own hearts. And since even the means of Divine appointment are ineffectual without the Spirit, these can never be effectual. But this consideration having a Divine appointment, the Spirit works by it.

Use. Then take this direction for your behaving rightly under the crook in your lot. Inure yourselves to consider it as the work of God. And for helping you to improve it, so as it may be effectual, I offer these advices:

1. Consider it as the work of your God in Christ. This is the way to sprinkle it with Gospel-grace, and so to make it tolerable. The discerning of a Father's hand in the crook will take out much of the bitterness of it, and sugar the pill to you. For this cause it will be necessary, (1.) Solemnly to take God for your God, under your crook. (2.) In all your encounters with it, resolutely to believe and claim your interest in Him.

2. Enlarge the consideration with a view of the Divine relations to you, and the Divine attributes. Consider it, being the work of your God, the work of your Father, elder Brother, Head, Husband, &c., who, therefore, surely consults your good. Consider His holiness and justice, showing He does not wrong you; His mercy and goodness, that it is not worse; His sovereignty, that may silence you; His infinite wisdom and love, that may satisfy you in it.

3. Consider what a work of His it is, how it is a convincing work, for bringing sin to remembrance: a correcting work, to chastise you for your follies, a preventing work, to hedge you up from courses of sin you would otherwise be apt to run into; a trying work, to discover your state, your graces, and corruption; a weaning work, to wean you from the world and fit you for heaven.

4. In all your considerations of it in this manner look upward for His Spirit to render them effectual. --Thus may you behave Christianly under it, till God make it even either here or in heaven.

"Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly,
than to divide the spoil with the proud "--Prov. 16:19.

Could men once be brought to believe that it is better to have their minds bend to the crook in their lot, than to force the crook to their mind, they would be in a fair way to bring their matters to a good account. Hear then the Divine decision in that case: "Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud. " In which words

First, There is a comparison instituted and that between two parties, and two points in which they vastly differ.

1st. The parties are the lowly and the proud, who differ like heaven and earth. The proud are climbing up and soaring aloft; the lowly are content to creep on the ground, if that is the will of God. Let us view them more particularly as the text represents them.

On the one hand is the lowly. Here there is a line-reading and a marginal, both from the Holy Spirit, and they differ only in a letter. The former is the afflicted or poor, that are low in their condition; those that have a notable crook in their lot through affliction laid on them, by which their condition is lowered in the world. The other is the lowly or meek humble ones, who are low in their spirit, as well as their condition, and so have their minds brought down to their lot. Both together making the character of this lowly party.

On the other hand is the proud, the gay and high-minded ones. It is supposed here that they are crossed too, and have crooks in their lot; for, dividing the spoil is the consequence of a victory, and a victory presupposes a battle.

2nd. The points wherein these parties are supposed to differ, namely, being of a humble spirit, and dividing the spoil.

Afflicted and lowly ones may sometimes get their condition changed, may be raised up on high, and divide the spoil, as Hannah, Job, &c. The proud may sometimes be thrown down and crushed, as Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, &c. But that is not the question, Whether it is better to be raised up with the lowly, or thrown down with the proud? There would be no difficulty in determining that. But the question is, whether it is better to be of a low and humble spirit, in low circumstances, with afflicted ones; or to divide the spoil, and get one's will, with the proud? If men would speak the native sentiments of their hearts, that question would be determined in a contradiction to the text. The points then here compared and set one against another are these:

On the one hand, to be of a humble spirit with afflicted lowly ones. To be low of spirit; for the word primarily denotes lowness in situation or state. So the point here proposed is to be with, or in the state of, afflicted lowly ones, having the spirit brought down to that low lot; the lowness of the spirit balancing the lowness of one's condition.

On the other hand, to divide the spoil with the proud. The point here proposed is, to be with or in the state of the proud, having their lot by main force brought to their mind; as those who, taking themselves to be injured, fight it out with the enemy, overcome and divide the spoil according to their will.

Secondly, The decision made, in which the former is preferred to the latter; "Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud." If these two parties were set before us, it were better to take our lot with those of a low condition, who have their spirits brought as low as their lot, than with those who, being of a proud and high spirit, have their lot brought up to their mind. A humble spirit is better than a heightened condition.

Doctrine. There is a generation of lowly afflicted ones, having their spirit lowered and brought down to their lot; whose case, in that respect, is better than that of the proud getting their will, and carrying all to their mind.

1. We shall consider the generation of the lowly afflicted ones, having their spirit brought down to their lot. And we shall,

First, Lay down some general considerations about them.

1. There is such a generation in the world, bad as the world is. The text expressly mentions them, and the Scripture elsewhere speaks of them. Where shall we seek them? Not in heaven, there are no afflicted ones there; nor in hell, there are no lowly or humble ones there, whose spirit is brought to their lot. In His world they must then be, where the state of trial is.

2. If it were not so, Christ, as He was in the world, would have no followers in it. He was the head of that generation whom they all copy after: "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart." And for His honor, and the honor of His cross, they will never be wanting while the world stands. "Whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son. " His image lies in these two, suffering and holiness, of which lowliness is a chief part.

3. Nevertheless they are certainly very rare in the world. Agur observes, that there is another generation ("their eyes are lofty, and their eyelids lifted up") quite opposite to them, and this makes the greatest company by far. The low and afflicted lot is not so very rare, but the lowly disposition of spirit is rarely yoked with it. Many a high spirit keeps up in spite of lowering circumstances.

4. They can be no more in number than the truly godly; for nothing less than the power of Divine grace can bring down men's minds from their native height, and make their will pliant to the will of God. Men may put on a face of submission to a law and a crossed lot, because they cannot help it, and they see it is in vain to strive; but to bring the spirit truly to it, must be the effect of humbling grace.

5. Though all the godly are of that generation, yet there are some of them to whom that character more especially belongs. The way to heaven lies through tribulation to all; and all Christ's followers are reconciled to it notwithstanding; yet there are some of them more remarkably disciplined than others, whose spirit is in this way humbled and brought down to their lot. "Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother; my soul is even as a weaned child." "For I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content with it. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abjured and to suffer need. "

6. A lowly disposition of soul, and habitual aim and bent of the heart that way, has a very favorable construction put upon it in heaven. Should we look for a generation perfectly purged of pride and risings of heart against their adverse lot at any time, we should find none in this world. But those who are sincerely

aiming and endeavoring to reach it, and keep the way of contented submission, though sometimes blown aside and returning to it again, God accounts to be that lowly generation.

Secondly, We shall enter into particulars. There are three things which together make up their character.

1st. Affliction in their lot. That lowly generation, preferred to the proud and prosperous, is a generation of afflicted ones, whom God keeps under the discipline of the covenant. We may take it up in these two:

1. There is a yoke of affliction of one kind or other oftentimes upon them. God is frequently visiting them as a master does his scholars, and a physician his patients; whereas others are in a sort overlooked by Him. They are accustomed to the yoke, and that from the time they enter into God's family, God sees it good for them.

2. There is a particular yoke of affliction which God has chosen for them, that hangs on them, and is seldom, if ever, taken off them. That is their special trial, the crook in their lot, the yoke which lies on them for their constant exercise. Their other trials may be exchanged, but that is a weight that still hangs about them, bowing them down.

2ndly. Lowliness in their disposition and tenor of spirit. They are a generation of lowly humble ones, whose spirits God has, by His grace, brought down from their natural height. And thus.

1. They think soberly and meanly of themselves; what they are; what they can do; what they are worth, and what they deserve. Viewing themselves in the glass of the Divine law and perfection, they see themselves as a mass of imperfection and sinfulness.

2. They think highly and honorably of God. They are taught by the Spirit what God is; and so entertain elevated thought of Him. They consider Him as the Sovereign of the world; His perfections as infinite; His work as perfect. They look on Him as the fountain of happiness, as a God in Christ, doing all things well; trusting His wisdom, goodness, and love, even where they cannot see.

3. They think favorably of others, as far as in justice they may. Though they cannot hinder themselves from seeing their glaring faults, yet they are ready withal to acknowledge their excellencies, and esteem them so far. And, because they see more into their own mercies and advantages for holiness, and misimproving of it, than they can see into others, they are apt to look on others as better than themselves, circumstances compared.

4. They are sunk down into a state of subordination to God and His will. Pride sets a man up against God; lowliness brings him back to his place, and lays him down at the feet of his sovereign Lord, saying, Your will be done on earth, &c. They seek no more the command, but are content that God Himself sit at the helm of their affairs, and manage all for them.

5. They are not bent on high things, but disposed to stoop to low things. Lowliness levels the towering imaginations which pride mounts up against heaven; draws a veil over all personal worth and excellencies before the Lord, and yields a man's all to the Lord, to be as stepping-stones to the throne of His glory.

6. They are apt to magnify mercies bestowed on them. Pride of heart overlooks and vilifies mercies one is possessed of, and fixes the eye on what is wanting in one's condition, making one like the flies, which pass over the sound places, and swarm together on the sore. On the contrary, lowliness teaches men to recount the mercies they enjoy in the lowest condition, and to set a mark on the good things they have

possessed, or yet do.

3rdly. A spirit brought down to their lot. Their lot is a low and afflicted one; but their spirit is as low, being, through grace, brought down to it. We may take it up in these five things:

1. They submit to it as just. "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him. " There are no hardships in our condition, but we have procured them to ourselves; and it is therefore just that we kiss the rod, and be silent under it, and so lower our spirits to our lot. If they complain, it is of themselves; their hearts do not rise up against the Lord, far less do they open their mouth against the heavens. They justify God, and condemn themselves, reverencing His holiness and spotless righteousness in His proceedings against them.

2. They go quietly under it as tolerable. "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sits alone, and keeps silence, because he has borne it on him; he puts his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope. " While the unsubdued spirit rages under the yoke as a bull unaccustomed to it, the spirit brought to the lot goes softly under it. They see it is of the Lord's mercies that it is not worse; they take up the naked cross, as God lays it down, without those overweights on it that turbulent passions add to them; and so it becomes really more easy than they thought it could have been, like a burden fitted on the back.

3. They are satisfied in it, as drawing their comfort from another quarter than their outward condition, even as the house stands fast when the prop is taken away that it did not lean on. "Although the fig-tree should not blossom, neither fruit is in the vine, - yet I will rejoice in the Lord. " Thus did David in the day of his distress. "He encouraged himself in the Lord his God. " It is an argument of a spirit not brought down to the hardships of it, as if their condition in the world were the point on which their happiness turned. It is want of mortification that makes men's comfort to wax and wane, ebb and flow, according to the various appearances of their lot in the world.

4. They have a complacency in it, as that which is fit and good for them. Men have a sort of complacency in the working of physic, though it gripes them sore; they rationally think with themselves that it is good and best for them. So these lowly souls consider their afflicted lot as a spiritual medicine, necessary, fit, and good for them; yea, best for them for the time, since it is ministered by their heavenly Father. So they reach a holy complacency in their low afflicted lot. The lowly spirit extracts this sweet out of the bitterness of his lot, considering how the Lord, by means of that afflicting lot, stops the provision for unruly lusts, that they may be starved; how He cuts off the by-channels, that the whole stream of the soul's love may run towards Himself; how He pulls off and holds off the man's burden and clog of earthly comforts, that he may run the more expeditiously in the way to heaven.

5. They rest in it, as what they desire not to come out of, till the God that brought them into it see it fit to bring them out with His good will. Though an unsubdued spirit's time for deliverance is always ready, a humble soul will be afraid of being taken out of its afflicted lot too soon. It will not be for moving for a change, till the heaven's moving brings it about. So this does not hinder prayer and the use of appointed means, with dependence on the Lord, but requires faith, hope, patience, and resignation.

II. We shall consider the generation of the proud getting their will, and carrying all to their mind. And in their character also are three things.

First, there are crosses in their lot. They also have their trials allotted them by overruling providence, and let them be in what circumstances they will in the world, they cannot miss them altogether. For, consider,--

1. The confusion and vanity brought into the creation by man's sin, have made it impossible to get through the world but men must meet with what will ruffle them. Sin has turned the world from a paradise into a thicket, there is no getting through without being scratched. As midges in the summer will fly about those walking abroad in a goodly attire, as well as about those in sordid apparel; so will crosses in the world meet with the high as well as the low.

2. The pride of their heart exposes them particularly to crosses. A proud heart will make a cross to itself, where a lowly soul would find none. It will make a real cross ten times the weight it would be to the humble. The generation of the proud are like nettles and thorn hedges, upon which things flying about do fix, while they pass over low and plain things; so none are more exposed to crosses than they, though none so unfit to bear them; as appears from,

Secondly, reigning pride in their spirit. Their spirits were never subdued by a work of thorough humiliation; they remain at the height in which the corruption of nature placed them. Thus they can by no means bear the yoke God lays on them. The neck is swollen with the ill humors of pride and passion; thus, when the yoke once begins to touch it, they cannot have any more ease. We may view the case of the proud generation here in three things.

1. They have an over-value for themselves; and so will not stoop to the yoke; it is below them. What a swelling vanity is in that, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?" Thus a work of humiliation is necessary to make one take on the yoke, whether of Christ's precepts or providence. The first error is in the understanding; from where Solomon ordinarily calls a wicked man a fool; accordingly the first stroke in conversion is there too, by conviction to humble. Men are bigger in their own conceit than they are indeed; therefore God, suiting things to what we are really, cannot please us.

2. They have an unmortified, self-will, arising from that over-value for themselves, and they will not stoop. The question between heaven and us is, whether God's will or our own must prevail? Our will is corrupt, God's will is holy; they cannot agree in one. God says in His providence, our will must yield to His; but that it will not do till the iron sinew in it is broken.

3. They have a crowd of unsubdued passions taking part with self-will. They say, He shall not stoop, and so the war begins, and there is a field of battle within and without man.

A holy God crosses the self-will of proud creatures by His providence, overruling and disposing of things contrary to their inclination; sometimes by His own immediate hand, as in the case of Cain, sometimes by the hand of men carrying things against their mind, as in the case of Ahab, to whom Naboth refused his vineyard.

The proud heart and will, unable to submit to the cross, or to bear to be controlled, rises up against it, and fights for the mastery, with its whole force of unmortified passions. The design is to remove the cross, even the crook, and bring the thing to their own mind. This is the cause of this unholy war, in which,

(1.) There is one black band of hellish passions that marches upward, and makes an attack; on heaven itself, namely, discontent, impatience, murmuring, frettings, and the like. "The foolishness of man perverts his way; and his heart frets against the Lord." These fire the beast, fall the countenance, let off sometimes

a volley of indecent and passionate complaints, and sometimes of blasphemies.

(2.) There is another that marches forward, and makes an attack on the instrument or instruments of the cross, namely, anger, wrath, fury, revenge, bitterness, &c. These carry the man out of the possession of himself, fill the heart with a boiling heat, the mouth with clamor, and evil-speaking, and threatenings are breathed out, and sometimes set the hands on work--a most heavy event--as in the case of Ahab against Naboth.

Thus the proud carry on the war, but oftentimes they lose the day, and the cross remains immovable for all they can do; yea, and sometimes they themselves fall in the quarrel, it ends in their ruin. But that is not the case in the text. For we are to consider them as,

Thirdly, getting their will, and carrying all to their mind. This speaks,

1. Holy providence yielding to the man's unmortified self-will, and letting it go according to his mind. God sees it suitable to let the struggle with him fall, for it does not prevail to his good. So the reins are laid on the proud man's neck, and he has what he would be at; "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone. "

2. The lust remaining in its strength and vigor. "They were not estranged from their lust." God, in the method of His covenant, sometimes gives His people their will, and sets them where they would be; but then, in that case, the lust for the thing is mortified, and they are as weaned children. But here the lust remains rampant. The proud seek meat for it and get it.

3. The cross removed, the yoke taken off. They could not think of bringing their mind to their lot; but they thwarted with it, wrestled and fought against it, till it is brought up to their mind; so the day is their own, the victory is on their side.

4. The man is pleased in his having carried his point, even as one is when he is dividing the spoil.

Thus the case of the afflicted lowly generation, and the proud generation prospering, is stated. Now,

III. I am to confirm the doctrine, or the decision of the text, that the case of the former is better than that of the latter. It is better to be in a low afflicted condition, with the spirit humbled and brought down to the lot, than to be of a proud and high spirit, getting the lot brought up to it, and matters going according to one's mind. This will appear from the following considerations.

1. Humility is so far preferable to pride, that in no circumstances whatever its preferableness can fail. Let all the afflictions in the world attend the humble spirit, and all the prosperity in the world attend pride, humility will still have the better. As gold in a dunghill is more excellent than so much lead in a cabinet, For,

(1.) Humility is a part of the image of God. Pride is the master-piece of the image of the devil. Let us view Him who was the express image of the Father's person, and we shall behold Him meek and lowly in heart. None more afflicted, yet His spirit perfectly brought down to His lot. 'He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth. " That is a shining part of the Divine image; for though God cannot be low in respect of His state and condition, yet He is of infinite condescension. None bears as He, nor suffers patiently so much contradiction to His will; which is proposed to us for our encouragement in affliction, as it shone in Christ. 'For consider Him that endures such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be wearied, and faint in your minds. "

Pride, on the other hand, is the very image of the devil. Shall we value ourselves on the height of our spirits? Satan will vie with the highest of us in that point. Though he is the most miserable, yet he is the proudest in the whole creation. There is the greatest distance between his spirit and his lot; the former is as high as the throne of God, the latter as low as hell. As it is impossible that ever his lot should be brought up to his spirit; so his spirit will never come down to his lot. Therefore he will be eternally in a state of war with his lot. Thus, even at this time, he has no rest, but goes about, seeks rest indeed, but finds none.

Now, is it not better to be like God than like the devil; like Him who is the fountain of all good, than him who is the spring and sink of all evil? Can anything possibly cast the balance here, and turn the preference to the other side? "Then better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, " &c.

(2.) Humility and lowliness of spirit qualify us for friendly communion and intercourse with God in Christ. Pride makes God our enemy. Our happiness here and hereafter depends on our friendly intercourse with heaven. If we have not that, nothing can make up our loss. If we have that nothing can make us miserable. "If God is for us who can be against us?" Now, who are they whom God is for but the humble and lowly? They who being in Christ are so made like Him. He blessed them, and declares them the heirs of the crown of glory: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. " He will look to them, be their condition ever so low, while He overlooks others. He will have respect to them however they are despised: "Though the Ford is high, yet He has respect to the lowly: but the proud He knows afar off. " He will dwell with them, however poorly they dwell. He will certainly exalt them in due time, however low they lie now.

Whom is He against? Whom does He resist? The proud. Them He curses, and that curse will dry up their arm at length. The proud man is God's rival; he makes himself his own god, and would have those about him make him theirs too; he rages, he blusters, if they will not fall down before him. But God will bring him down.

Now, is it not better to be qualified for communion with God than to have Him engaged against us, at any rate?

(3.) Humility is a duty pleasing to God, pride a sin pleasing to the devil. God requires us to be humble, especially under affliction, "and be clothed with humility. " That is our becoming garment. The humble publican was accepted, the proud Pharisee rejected. We may say of the generation of the proud as "Wrath is come on them to the uttermost. " They please neither God nor men, but only themselves and Satan, whom they resemble in it. Now duty is better than sin at any rate.

2. They whose spirits are brought down to their afflicted lot have much quiet and repose of mind, while the proud, that must have their lot brought up to their mind, have much disquiet, trouble, and vexation. Consider here on the one hand that quiet of mind, and ease within is a great blessing upon which the comfort of life depends. Nothing without this can make one's life happy. And where this is maintained nothing can make it miserable. This being secured in God that is a defiance bid to all the troubles of the world, like the child sailing in the midst of the rolling waves. The spirit brought down to the lot makes and maintains this inward tranquillity. Our whole trouble in our lot in the world rises from the disagreement of our mind with it; let the mind be brought to the lot, and the whole tumult is instantly hushed; let it be kept in that disposition, and the man shall stand at ease in his affliction, like a rock unmoved with waters beating on it: "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also you are called."

On the other hand, consider what disquiet of mind the proud suffer before they can get their lot brought up to their mind. "They have taught their tongues to speak lies, and they weary themselves to commit iniquity." "You lust, and have not: you kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: you fight and war, yet you have not. " What arrows of grief go through their heart! What torture of anxiety, fretting, and vexation must they endure! What contrary passions fight within them! And what sallies of passion do they make! What uneasiness was Haman in because he could carry the point of revenge against Mordecai by obtaining the king's decree!

When the thing is got to their mind it will not quit the cost. The enjoyment of it does not bring so much satisfaction and pleasure as the want of it gave pain. This was evident in Rachel's case, as to the having of children. There is a dead fly in the ointment that mars the savour they expected to find in it. Fruit plucked off the tree of providence before it is ripe will readily set the teeth on edge. It proves like the manna kept over night.

They have but an unsure hold of it; it does not last with them. Either it is taken from them soon, and they are just where they were again, "I gave you a king in my anger, and took him away in my wrath, " having a root of pride, it quickly withers away; or else they are taken from it, that they have no access to enjoy it. So Haman obtained the decree; but before the day of the execution came he was gone.

3. They that get their spirit brought down to their afflicted lot gain a point far more valuable than they who in their pride force up their lot to their mind. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that rules his spirit, than he that takes a city. " This will appear if you consider,

(1.) The latter makes but a better condition in outward things, the former makes a better man. The life is more than meat. The man himself is more valuable than all external conveniences that attend him. What therefore betters the man is preferable to what betters only his condition. Who doubts but where two are sick, and the one gets himself transported from a coarse bed to a fine one, the sickness still remaining; the other lies still in the coarse bed, but the sickness is removed; that the case of the latter is preferable? So here, &c.

(2.) The subduing of our own passions is more excellent than to have the whole world subdued to our will: for then we are masters of ourselves, according to that. Whereas, in the other case, we are still slaves to the worst of masters. In the one case we are safe, blow what storm will; in the other we lie exposed to thousands of dangers. "He that has no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls. "

(3.) When both shall come to be judged it will appear the one has multiplied the tale of their good works in bringing their spirit to their lot; the others the tale of their ill works in bringing their lot to their spirit. We have to do with an omniscient God, in whose eyes every internal action is a work, good or bad, to be reckoned for.

An afflicted lot is painful, but where it is well managed it is very fruitful; it exercises the graces of the spirit of a Christian, which otherwise would lie dormant. But there is never an act of resignation to the will of God under the cross, nor an act of trusting in Him for His help, but they will be recorded in heaven's register as good works. And these are occasioned by affliction.

On the other hand there is never a rising of the proud heart against the lot, nor a faithless attempt to bring it to our mind, whether it succeed or not, but it passes for an ill work before God. How then will the tale of

such be multiplied by the way in which the spoil is divided!

Use 1. Of information. Hence we may learn,

1. It is not always best for folks to get their will. Many there are who cannot be pleased with God's will about them, and they get their own will with a vengeance. "Israel would none of me, so I gave them up to their own hearts' lusts, and they walked in their own counsels." It may be most pleasant and grateful for the time but it is not the safest. Let not the people pride themselves in their carrying things that way then by a strong hand; let them not triumph in such victory: the after-reckoning will open their eyes.

2. The afflicted crossed party whose lot is kept low is so far from being a loser that he is a gainer by it if his spirit is brought down to it. And if he will see things in the light of God's unerring Word, he is in better case than if he had got all carried to his mind. In the one way the vessels of wrath are fitted for destruction. In the other the vessels of mercy are fitted for glory, and so God disciplines His own.

3. It is better to yield to Providence than to fight it out, though we should win. Yielding to the sovereign disposal is both our becoming duty and our greatest interest. Taking that way we act most honorably; for what honor can there be in the creature's disputing his ground with his Creator? And we act most wisely; for whatever may be the success of some battles in that case, we may be sure victory will be on heaven's side in the war, "For by strength shall no man prevail. "

4. It is of so much greater concern for us to get our spirits brought down than our outward condition raised. But who believes this? All men strive to raise their outward condition; most men never mind the bringing down of their spirits, and few there are who apply themselves to it. And what is that but to be concerned to minister drink to the thirsty sick, but never to mind to seek a cure for them, by which their thirst may be carried off.

Use 2. Of exhortation. As you meet with crosses in your lot in the world, let your desire be rather to have your spirit humbled and brought down than to get the cross removed. I mean not but that you may use all lawful means for the removal of your cross, in dependence on God; but only that you be more concerned to get your spirit to bow and ply, than to get the crook in your lot evened.

Motive 1. It is far more needful for us to have our spirits humbled under the cross than to have the cross removed. The removal of the cross is needful only for the ease of the flesh, the humbling for the profit of our souls, to purify them, and bring them into a state of health and cure.

2. The humbling of the spirit will have a mighty good effect on a crossed lot, but the removal of the cross will have none on the unhumbled spirit. The humbling will lighten the cross mightily for the time, and in due time carry it cleanly off. But the removal of the cross is not a means to humble the unhumbled; though it may prevent irritation, yet the disease still remains.

3. Think with yourselves how dangerous and hopeless a case it is to have the cross removed before the spirit is humbled; that is, to have the means of cure pulled away and blocked up from us while the power of the disease is yet unbroken; to be taken off trials before we have given any good proof of ourselves, and so to be given over of our Physician as hopeless.

Use 3. For direction. Believing the Gospel, take God for your God in Christ towards your eternal salvation, and then dwell much on the thoughts of God's greatness and holiness, and of your own sinfulness; so will you be humbled under the mighty hand of God; and in due time He will lift you up.

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God,

that He may exalt you in due time--1 Peter 5:6.

In the preceding part of this chapter the apostle presents the duties of the church officers towards the people; and then the duty of the people, both towards their officers and among themselves, which he winds up in one word, submission. For which causes he recommends humility as the great means to bring all to their respective duties. This is enforced with an argument taken from the different treatment the Lord gives to the proud and the humble: his opposing Himself to the one, and showing favor to the other. Our text is an exhortation drawn from that consideration: and in it we have,

1st. The duty we are to study: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." And in this we may notice,

(1.) The state of those to whom it is proposed, those under the mighty hand of God whom His hand has humbled or brought low in respect of their circumstances in the world. And by these, I think, are meant, not only such as are under particular signal afflictions, which is the lot of some, but also those who, by the providence of God, are in any kind of way lowered, which is the lot of all. All being in a state of submission or dependence on others, God has made this life a state of trial; and for that cause He has, by His mighty hand, subjected men one to another, as wives, children, servants, to husbands, parents, masters; and these again to their superiors; among whom, again, even the highest depend on those under them, as magistrates and ministers on the people, even the supreme magistrate. This state of the world God has made for the trial of men in their several stations and dependence on others; and therefore, when the time of trial is over, it also comes to an end. "Then comes the end, when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power." Meantime, while it lasts, it makes humility necessary to all, to prompt them to the duty they owe their superiors, to whom God's mighty hand has subjected them.

(2.) The duty itself, namely, humiliation of our spirits under the humbling circumstances the Lord has placed us in. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." Whether we are under particular afflictions, which have cast us down from the height we were sometime in, or whether we are only inferiors in one or more relations, or whether, which is most common, both these are in our case, we must in this eye the mighty hand of God, as that which places us there, and is over us, there to hold us down in it; and so, with an awful regard to it, bow down under it, in the temper and disposition of our spirits, suiting our spirits to our lot, and careful of performing the duty of our low sphere.

(3.) A particular spring of this duty: therefore we must consider, that those who cannot quietly keep the place assigned them of God in their afflictions or relation, but still press upward against the mighty hand that is over them, that mighty hand resists them, throwing them down, and often farther down than before; whereas it treats them with grace and favor that compose themselves under it to a quiet discharge of their duty in their situation; so, eyeing this, we must set ourselves to humble ourselves.

2ndly. The infallible issue of that course; that He may exalt you in due time. The particle that is not always to be understood finally, as denoting the end or design the agent proposes to himself, but sometimes eventually only, as denoting the event or issue of the action. So here, the meaning is not, Humble yourselves, on design He may exalt you; but, and it shall issue in His exalting you.

(1.) Here

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