

Mute Christian Under the Smarting Rod -Part 3

by Thomas Brooks

Understanding afflictions as opportunities for spiritual growth and conformity to Christ is key to living a life of faith and experiencing God's love.

Scripture: Psalm 39:9, Psalm 94:19, Isaiah 43:2, Romans 8:28, 1 Corinthians 10:13, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, 2 Timothy 4:22, Hebrews 12:10, James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 5:10

Topics: "Suffering", "Trust in God's Love"

Description

Thomas Brooks emphasizes the necessity of remaining silent and trusting in God's love during afflictions, arguing that true understanding of God's love in suffering can transform our perspective. He addresses common objections to silence in suffering, asserting that afflictions can draw us closer to God, teach us valuable lessons, and ultimately lead to spiritual growth. Brooks encourages believers to recognize that their trials are tailored to their strength and serve a divine purpose, urging them to focus on the eternal glory that awaits them rather than their temporary pain. He concludes that patience in suffering can lead to a deeper relationship with Christ and greater spiritual rewards.

Transcript

"Mute Christian under the Smarting Rod" or,

"The Silent Soul with Sovereign Antidotes"

by Thomas Brooks, 1659, London.

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

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

I shall now address myself to answer those OBJECTIONS, and to remove those impediments which hinder poor souls from being silent and mute under the afflicting hand of God.

Objection 1. Sir! did I but know that I were afflicted in love, I would hold my peace under my affliction, I would sit mute before the Lord; but oh! how shall I come to understand that these strokes are the strokes of love, that these wounds are the wounds of a friend? I answer:

1. First, If your heart be drawn more out to the Lord by your afflictions, then the afflictions are in love. If they are so sanctified as that they draw out your soul to love the Lord more, and to fear the Lord more, and to please the Lord more, and to cleave to the Lord more, and to wait on the Lord more, and to walk with the Lord more--then they are in love. Oh, then they are the wounds of a friend indeed! It is reported of the lioness, that she leaves her young whelps until they have almost killed themselves with roaring and yelling, and then at the last gasp, when they have almost spent themselves, she relieves them, and by this means they become more courageous; and so if the afflictions which are upon us do increase our courage, strengthen our patience, raise our faith, inflame our love, and enliven our hopes, certainly they are in love, and all our wounds are the wounds of a friend. But

2. Secondly, If you are more careful and studious how to glorify God in the affliction, and how to be kept from sinning under the affliction, than how to yet out of the affliction, then certainly your affliction is in love, Dan. 3. and 5:16,17, Heb. 11. Where God smites in love, there the soul makes it his study how to glorify God, and how to lift up God, and how to be a light and an honor to God. The daily language of such a soul under the rod is this--Lord! stand by me that I sin not, uphold me that I sin not, strengthen me that I sin not, John 7:7-10. He who will not sin to repair and make up his losses, though he knew assuredly that the committing of such a sin would make up all again, he may conclude that his affliction is in love.

I have read of a nobleman whose son and heir was supposed to be bewitched, and being advised to go to some wizard, as they are called, to have some help for his son, that he might be unwitched again, he answered, Oh, by no means, I had rather the witch should have my son than the devil. His son should suffer rather than he would sin him out of his sufferings. He who will not break the hedge of a fair command to avoid the foul way of some heavy affliction, may well conclude that his affliction is in love. Christians! what do you say, when you are in the mount; do you thus bespeak the Lord?--'Lord! take care of your glory, and let me rather sink in my affliction than sin under my affliction.' If this be the bent and frame of your heart, it is certain the affliction that is upon you is in love. The primitive times afforded many such brave spirits, though this age affords but few.

3. Thirdly, If you enjoy the special presence of God with your spirits in your affliction, then your affliction is in love, Psalm 23:4-6. Isaiah 43:2, 'When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you--when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burnt, neither shall the flames kindle upon you.' Have you a special presence of God with your spirit, strengthening of that, quieting of that, stilling of that, satisfying of that, cheering and comforting of that? Psalm 94:19, 'In the multitude of my thoughts,'--that is, of my troubled, intricate, ensnared, intertwined and perplexed thoughts--'your comforts delight my soul.' Here is a presence of God with his soul, here are comforts and delights that reach the soul, here is a cordial to strengthen the spirit.

When all things went cross with Andronicus, the old emperor of Constantinople, he took a Psalter into his hand, and opening the same, he lighted upon Psalm 68:14, 'When the Almighty scattered kings, they shall be white as snow in Salmon;' which scripture was a mighty comfort and refreshment to his spirit. Now you are to remember that Salmon signifies shady and dark; so was this mount, by the reason of many lofty fair-spread trees that were near it--but made lightsome by snow that covered it. So that to be white as snow in Salmon, is to have joy in affliction, light in darkness, mercy in misery, etc. And thus God was to the psalmist in the midst of his greatest afflictions--as snow in Salmon. When Paul would wish his dear son Timothy the best mercy in all the world, the greatest mercy in all the world, the most comprehensive mercy in all the world, a mercy that carries the virtue, value, and sweetness of all mercies in it, he wishes the presence of God with his spirit--2 Tim. 4:22, 'The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit', in point of

honor, in point of profit and pleasure, in point of safety and security, and in point of comfort and joy. It is the greatest blessing and happiness in this world to have the presence of God with our spirits, especially in times of trials--2 Cor. 4:16, 'For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.' By the 'outward man,' you are to understand not merely our bodies--but our persons, estates, and outward conditions in this world; and by the 'inward man,' you are to understand our souls, our spiritual estate. Now, when the inward man gains new strength by every new trouble, when as troubles, pressures, afflictions, and tribulations are increased--a Christian's inward strength is increased also, when his afflictions are in love. When the presence of God is with our inward man, cheering, comforting, encouraging, strengthening, and renewing of that, we may safely conclude that all these trials, though they are ever so sharp and acute, yet they are in love.

I have read of a company of poor Christians that were banished into some remote parts, and one standing by, seeing them pass along, said that it was a very sad condition those poor people were in, to be thus exiled from the society of men, and to be made companions with the beasts of the field. True, said another, it were a sad condition indeed if they were carried to a place where they should not find their God; but let them be of good cheer, God goes along with them, and will exhibit the comforts of his presence wherever they go. The presence of God with the spirits of his people--is a breast of comfort that can never be drawn dry; it is an everlasting spring that will never fail, Heb. 13:5, 6. Well! Christian, you are under many great troubles, many sore trials--but tell me, does God give unto your soul such cordials, such supports, such comforts, and such refreshments, that the world knows not of? Oh! then, certainly your affliction is in love.

4. Fourthly, If by your affliction you are made more conformable to Christ in his virtues, there certainly your afflictions are in love. Many are conformable to Christ in their sufferings, who are not made conformable to Christ in his virtues by their sufferings; many are in poverty, neglect, shame, contempt, reproach, etc., like Christ was--who yet by these are not made more like Christ in his meekness, humbleness, heavenliness, holiness, righteousness, faithfulness, fruitfulness, goodness, contentedness, patience, submission, subjection. Oh! but if in these things you are made more like Christ, without question, your afflictions are in love. If by afflictions the soul be led to show forth the virtues of Christ, then certainly those afflictions are in love; for they never have such an operation but where they are set on by a hand of love.

When God strikes as an enemy, then all those strokes do but make a man more an enemy to God, as you see in Pharaoh and others; but when the strokes of God are the strokes of love, oh! then they do but bring the soul nearer Christ, and transform the soul more and more into the likeness of Christ, Isaiah 26:8-10. Jer. 6:3, Amos 6:1. If by your afflictions you are made more holy, humble, heavenly, etc., they are in love. Every afflicted Christian should strive to be honored with that eulogy of Salvian--an excellent disciple of a singular master. But,

5. Fifthly, If by outward afflictions your soul is brought more under the inward teachings of God, doubtless your afflictions are love, Job 34:31, 32. Psalm 94:12, 'Blessed is the man whom you chasten O Lord, and teach out of your law.' All the chastening in the world, without divine teaching, will never make a man blessed; that man who finds correction attended with instruction, and lashing with lessoning--is a happy man. If God, by the affliction that is upon you, shall teach you how to loathe sin more, how to trample upon the world more, and how to walk with God more--your afflictions are in love. If God shall teach you by afflictions how to die to sin more, and how to die to your relations more, and how to die to your self-interest more--your afflictions are in love. If God shall teach you by afflictions how to live to Christ more, how to lift up Christ more, and how to long for Christ more--your afflictions are in love. If God shall teach you by

afflictions to get assurance of a better life, and to be still in a gracious readiness and preparedness for the day of your death--your afflictions are in love. If God shall teach you by afflictions how to mind heaven more, how to live in heaven more, and how to fit for heaven more--your afflictions are in love. If God by afflictions shall teach your proud heart how to lie more low, and your hard heart how to grow more tender, and your censorious heart how to grow more charitable, and your carnal heart how to grow more spiritual, and your froward heart how to grow more quiet--your afflictions are in love. When God teaches your thoughts as well as your brains, your heart as well as your head, these lessons, or any of these lessons--your afflictions are in love.

Pambo, an illiterate dunce, as the historian terms him, was a-learning that one lesson, 'I said I will take heed to my ways that I sin not with my tongue,' nineteen years, and yet had not learned it. Ah! it is to be feared that there are many who have been in the school of affliction above this nineteen years, and yet have not learned any beneficial lesson all this while. Surely their afflictions are not in love--but in wrath. Where God loves, he afflicts in love, and wherever God afflicts in love, there he will, sooner or later, teach such souls such lessons as shall do them good to all eternity. But,

(6.) Sixthly, If God suits your burdens to your backs, your trials to your strength, according to that golden promise, 1 Cor. 10:13, your afflictions are in love. 'There has no temptation taken you--but such as is common to man--but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it.' When God's strokes and a Christian's strength are suited one to another--all is in love, Isaiah 27:8, Jer. 30:11, 46:28. Let the load be ever so heavy that God lays on, if he puts under his everlasting arms--all is in love, Gen. 49:23, 24. As Egypt had many venomous creatures, so it had many antidotes against them. When God shall lay antidotes into the soul against all the afflictions which befall a Christian--then they are all in love. It is no matter how heavy the burden is, if God gives a shoulder to bear it--all is in love; it is no matter how bitter the cup is, if God gives courage to drink it off; it is no matter how hot the furnace is, if God gives power to walk in the midst of it--all is in love.

(7.) Seventhly, If you are willing to lie in the furnace until your dross be consumed; if you are willing that the plaster should lie on, though it smart, until the cure be wrought; if you are willing that the medicine should work, though it makes you sick, until the humors be expelled; all is in love, Job 23:10, Micah 7:9. Cain, and Saul, and Pharaoh, were all for the removing away of the stroke, the affliction; they cry not out, 'Our sins are greater than we are able to bear'--but they cry out, 'Our punishment is greater than we are able to bear;' they do not cry out, 'Lord, take away our sins,' but 'Lord, remove the stroke of your hand.' Oh! But when an affliction comes in love upon a soul, the language of that soul is this--Lord, remove the cause rather than the effect, the sin rather than the punishment, my corruption rather than my affliction! Lord! what will it avail me to have the sore skinned over, if the corrupt matter still remains inside? there is no evil, Lord, to the evil of sin; and therefore deliver me rather from the evil of sin than the evil of suffering. I know, Lord, that affliction cannot be so displeasing to me as sin is dishonorable and displeasing to you; and therefore, Lord, let me see an end of my sin, though in this world I should never see an end of my sorrows; oh, let me see an end of my corruptions, though I should never see an end of my corrections; Lord, I had rather have a cure for my heart than a cure for my head; I had rather be made whole and sound within than without; I had rather have a healthy soul than a healthy body; a pure inside than a beautiful outside. If this be the settled frame and temper of your spirit, certainly your afflictions are in love.

There was one who, being under extremely great pains and torments in his body, occasioned by many sore diseases which were upon him, cried out, Had I all the world I would give it for ease, and yet for all

the world I would not have ease until the cure be wrought. Sure his afflictions were in love. The first request, the great request, and the last request of a soul afflicted in love, is, "A cure, Lord! a cure, Lord! a cure, Lord! of this wretched heart, and this sinful life, and all will be well, all will be well."

(8.) Eighthly and lastly, If you live a life of faith, while in your afflictions--then your afflictions are in love. Now, what is it to live by faith in affliction--but to live in the exercising of faith upon those precious promises that are made over to an afflicted condition? God has promised to be with his people in their afflictions, Isaiah 43:2, 3; he has promised to support them under their affliction, Isaiah 41:10; he has promised to deliver his people out of their afflictions, Psalm 50:15; he has promised to purge away his people's sins by affliction, Isaiah 1:25; he has promised to make his people more partakers of his holiness by affliction, Heb. 12:10; he has promised to make affliction an inlet to a more full and sweet enjoyment of himself, Hos. 2:14; he has promised that he will never leave nor forsake his people in their afflictions, Heb. 13:5, 6; he has promised that all their afflictions shall work for their good, Zech. 13:9; Rom. 8:28. Now if your faith is drawn forth to feed upon these promises, if these be heavenly manna to your faith, and your soul lives upon them, and sucks strength and sweetness from them, under all the trials and troubles that are upon you--then your afflictions are in love.

A bee can suck honey out of a flower, which a fly cannot. If your faith can extract comfort and sweetness in your distresses, out of the breasts of precious promises, and gather one contrary out of another, honey out of the rock, Deut. 32:13, your afflictions are in love. The promises are full breasts, and God delights that faith should draw them; they are the food of faith, and the very soul of faith; they are an everlasting spring that can never be drawn dry; they are an inexhaustible treasure that can never be exhausted; they are the garden of paradise, and full of such choice flowers that will never fade--but be always fresh, sweet, green and flourishing. And if, in the day of affliction, they prove thus to your soul--your afflictions are in love.

Sertorius paid what he promised, with mere words--but God does not so. Men many times eat their words--but God will never eat his; all his promises in Christ are yes and in him amen, 1 Cor. 1:20. Has he spoken it, and shall it not come to pass? If in all your troubles your heart is drawn forth to act faith upon the promises--your troubles are from love. And thus much by way of answer to the first objection.

Objection 2. Oh--but, sir! the Lord has smitten me in my nearest and dearest comforts and contentments--so how then can I hold my peace? God has taken away a husband, a wife, a child, an only child, a bosom-friend, and how then can I be silent? To this I answer,

(1.) First, If God did not strike you in that comfort which was near and dear unto you--it would not amount to an affliction. That is not worthy the name of an affliction that does not strike at some bosom mercy; that trouble is no trouble that does not touch some choice contentment; that storm is no storm that only blows on the leaves--but never hurts the fruit; that thrust is no thrust that only touches the clothes--but never reaches the skin; that cut is no cut that only cuts the hat--but never touches the head; neither is that affliction any affliction that only reaches some remote enjoyment--but never reaches a Joseph, a Benjamin, etc.

(2.) Secondly, The best mercy is not too good for the best God. The best of the best is not good enough for him who is goodness itself; the best child, the best friend, the best jewel in all your crown must be readily resigned to your best God. There is no mercy, no enjoyment, no contentment worthy of God--but the best. The milk of mercy is for others--the cream of mercy is due to God. The choicest, the fairest, and

the sweetest flowers are fittest for the bosom of God; if he will take the best flower in all the garden, and plant it in a better soil--have you any cause to murmur? Will you not remain silent before the Lord? Mal. 1:13, 14.

(3.) Thirdly, Your near and dear mercies were first the Lord's before they were yours--and always the Lord's more than they were yours. When God gives a mercy, he does not relinquish his own right in that mercy-- 1 Chron. 29:14, 'Everything comes from You, and we have given You only what comes from Your own hand.' The sweet of mercy is yours--but the sovereign right to dispose of your mercies is the Lord's. Whatever you are, you owe to him who made you; and whatever you have, you owe to him who redeemed you. You say it is but just and reasonable that men should do with their own as they please; and is it not just and reasonable that God, who is Lord paramount, should do with his own as he pleases? Do you believe that the great God may do in heaven what he pleases? and on the seas what he pleases? and in the nations and kingdoms of the world what he pleases? and in your heart what he pleases? And do you not believe that God may do in your house what he pleases, and do with your mercies what he pleases?

Job 9:12, 'Behold, he takes away', or he snatches away, it may be a husband, a wife, a child, an estate, 'who can hinder him? Who will say unto him, what are you doing?' Who dares cavil against God? Who dares question that God who is unquestionable, that sovereign Lord who is uncontrollable, and who may do with his own whatever he pleases? Dan. 4:35, 'All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: What have you done?' Where is the prince, the peasant, the master, the servant, the husband, the wife, the father, the child, that dares say to God, 'What have you done?' Isaiah 14:9.

In matters of arithmetical accounts, set one against ten, ten against a hundred, a hundred against a thousand, a thousand against ten thousand, although there be great odds, yet there is some comparison; but if a man could set down an infinite number, then there could be no comparison at all, because the one is infinite, the other finite. So set all the princes and powers of the earth in opposition to God, they shall never be able to withstand him. It was once the saying of Pompey, that with one stamp of his foot he could raise all Italy in arms; but let the great God but stamp with his foot, and he can raise all the world in arms, to own him, to contend for him, or to revenge any affronts that are put upon him by any; and therefore who shall say unto him, 'What have you done?'

Water is stronger than earth, fire stronger than water, angels stronger than men, and God stronger than them all; and therefore who shall say unto God, 'What have you done?' when he takes their nearest and their dearest mercies from them? But,

(4.) Fourthly, It may be, that you have not made any IMPROVEMENT on your near and dear mercies, while you had them. You have been taken up with your mercies--but your heart has not been taken up in the improvement of them. There are many who are very much taken up with their mercies, who make no conscience of improving their mercies. Have your near and dear mercies been a star to lead you to Christ? Have they been a cloud by day, and a pillar of light by night, to lead you towards the heavenly Canaan? Have they been a Jacob's ladder to your soul? Have you by them been provoked to give up yourself to God as a living sacrifice? Rom. 12:1. Have you improved your near and dear mercies to the inflaming of your love to God, to the strengthening of your confidence in God, to the raising of your communion with God, and to the engaging of your heart to a more close and circumspect walking before God? etc. If you have not thus improved them--you have more cause to be mute than to murmur; to be silent than to be impatient; to be upset with yourself than to be upset with your God.

Children and fools use many things--but improve nothing. Such children and fools are most men; they are much taken up with their mercies--but they make no improvement of their mercies; and therefore no wonder if God strips them of their mercies. The candle of mercy is set up not to play by--but to work by.

Pliny speaks of one Cressinus, who improved a little piece of ground to a far greater advantage than his neighbors could a greater quantity of land. Thereupon he was accused of witchcraft; but he, to defend himself, brought into the court his working tools, and said, 'these are my witchcrafts, O you Romans! These working tools are all the witchcraft that I know of!' When the people heard this plea, with one consent they acquitted him, and declared him not guilty; and so his little piece of ground was secured to him.

There is no way to secure your mercies but by improving of them; there is nothing that provokes God to strip you of your mercies like the non-improvement of them--Mat. 25:28-31, 'Take therefore the one talent from him, and give it unto him who has ten talents.' By some stroke or other, God will take away the mercy that is not improved. If your slothfulness has put God upon passing a sentence of death upon the dearest mercy--thank yourself--and remain silent before the Lord!

(5.) Fifthly, God has given you many examples of dear mercies being removed from those who are eminently pious. How much more, then, should you be mute, where God has made many others examples to you! Did not God smite Aaron in his dear and near enjoyments, Lev. 10:1, 2 and does he not remain silent? Did not God smite David in his Absalom, and Abraham in his Sarah, and Job in his sons, daughters, estate, and body, and Jonah in his gourd? Are you more beloved than these godly ones? No! Have you more grace than these? No! Have you done more for divine glory than these? No! Are you richer in spiritual experiences than these? No! Have you attained to higher enjoyments than these? No! Have you been more serviceable in your generation than these? No! Have you been more exemplary in your life and conversation than these? etc. No! Then why should you murmur and fret at that which has been the common lot of the dearest saints?

Though God has smitten you in this or that near and dear enjoyment, it is your wisdom to remain silent before the Lord, for that God that has taken away one--might have taken away all. Justice writes a sentence of death upon all Job's mercies at once, and yet he holds his peace; and will not you hold yours, though God has cropped the fairest flower in all your garden?

So when our hearts begin to storm and complain when God smites us in this near mercy and in that dear enjoyment, oh let us lay the law of silence upon our hearts! let us charge our souls to be quiet! for that God that has taken away one child, might have taken away every child; and he who has taken away one friend, might have taken away every friend; and he who has taken away a part of your estate, might have taken away your whole estate--therefore remain silent before the Lord; let who will murmur--yet you be mute.

(6.) Sixthly, It may be your sins have been much about your near and dear enjoyments. It may be you have over-loved them, and over-prized them, and over-much delighted yourself in them. It may be they have often had your heart, when they should have had but your hand. It may be that care, that concern, that confidence, that joy which should have been expended upon more noble objects, has been expended upon them. Your heart, O Christian! is Christ's bed of spices, and it may be you have bedded your mercies with you, when Christ has been made to lie outside! Luke 2:7. You have had room for them--when you have had none for him! They have had the best--when the worst have been counted good enough for Christ!

It is said of Reuben, that he went up to his father's bed, Gen. 49:4. Ah! how often has one creature comfort and sometimes another, been put in between Christ and your souls! how often have your dear enjoyments gone up to Christ's bed!

It is said of the Babylonians, that they came in to Aholah and Aholibah's bed of love, Ezek. 23:17; may it not be said of your near and dear mercies, that they have come into Christ's bed of love, your hearts; they being that bed wherein Christ delights to rest and repose himself? Cant. 3:7. Now, if you take a husband, a child, a friend--into that room in your soul which only belongs to God--he will either embitter it, remove it, or be the death of it. If once the love of a wife runs out more to a servant than to her husband, the husband will remove that servant; though otherwise he was a servant worth gold.

The sweetest comforts of this life, they are but like treasures of snow; now do but take a handful of snow, and crush it in your hands, and it will melt away presently; but if you let it lie upon the ground, it will continue for some time. And so it is with the contentments of this world; if you grasp them in your hands and lay them too near your hearts, they will quickly melt and vanish away; but if you will not hold them too fast in your hands, nor lay them too close to your hearts, they will abide the longer with you.

There are those who love their mercies into their graves--who hug their mercies to death--who kiss them until they kill them! Many a man has slain his mercies, by setting too great a value upon them! Many a man has sunk his ship of mercy, by overloading it. Over-loved mercies are seldom long lived-- Ezek. 24:21, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am about to desecrate my sanctuary--the stronghold in which you take pride, the delight of your eyes, the object of your affection. The sons and daughters you left behind will fall by the sword.' The way to lose your mercies is to indulge them; the way to destroy them is to fix your minds and hearts upon them. You may write bitterness and death upon that mercy first--which has first taken away your heart from God. Now, if God has stripped you of that very mercy with which you have often committed spiritual adultery and idolatry--have you any cause to murmur? Have you not rather cause to remain silent before the Lord, and to be mute before the Lord? Christians! Your hearts are Christ's royal throne, and in this throne Christ will be chief, as Pharaoh said to Joseph, Gen. 12:40; he will endure no competitor. If you attempt to enthrone the creature, be it ever so near and dear unto you--Christ will dethrone it! He will destroy it! He will quickly lay them in a bed of dust--who shall aspire to his royal throne! But,

(7.) Seventhly, You have no cause to murmur because of the loss of such near and dear enjoyments, considering those more noble and spiritual mercies and favors that you still enjoy. Grant that Joseph is not, and Benjamin is not, Gen. 42:36. Yet Jesus is! He is yesterday, and today, and the same forever, Heb. 13:8; your union and communion with Christ remains still; the immortal seed abides in you still, 1 John 3:9; the Sun of righteousness shines upon you still; you are in favor with God still, and you are under the anointings of the Spirit still, and under the influences of heaven still, etc. So why then should you mutter--and not rather remain silent before the Lord?

I have read of one Didymus, a godly preacher, who was blind; Alexander, a godly man, once asked him, whether he was not sorely troubled and afflicted for lack of his sight? Oh yes! said Didymus, it is a great affliction and grief unto me! Then Alexander chid him, saying, Has God given you an excellency above an angel--and are you troubled for that which rats and mice and brute beasts have? Ah, Christians! has God blessed you with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places? Eph. 1:3, 4. Has the Lord given you himself for a portion? Has he given you his Son for your redemption, and his Spirit for your instruction--and will you murmur? Has he given his grace to adorn you, his promises to comfort you, his ordinances to better you,

and the hopes of heaven to encourage you; and will you mutter?

Paulinus Nolanus, when his city was taken from him, prayed thus--'Lord! said he, let me not be troubled at the loss of my gold, silver, honor, etc., for you are all, and much more than all these unto me!' In the absence of all your sweetest enjoyments, Christ will be all in all unto you, Col. 3:11. My jewels are my husband, said Phocion's wife. My ornaments are my two sons, said the mother of the Gracchi. My treasures are my friends, said Constantius. And so may a Christian under his greatest losses say--Christ is my richest jewels, my chief treasures, my best ornaments, my sweetest delights. What all these things are to a carnal heart, a worldly heart--that and more--is Christ to me!

(8.) Eighthly, If God, by smiting you in your nearest and dearest enjoyments, shall put you upon a more thorough smiting and mortifying of your dearest sins--you have no cause to murmur. God cures David of adultery by killing his endeared child. There is some Delilah, some darling, some beloved sin or other--that a Christian's calling, condition, constitution, or temptations--leads him to play with, and to hug in his own bosom, Psalm 18:23, Heb. 12:1. As in a plot of ground that lies untilled, among the great variety of weeds there is usually some master-weed, which is more plenteous and more repulsive than all the rest. And as it is in the body of man, that although in some degree or other, more or less, there is a mixture of all the four elements, not any of them wholly lacking, yet there is some one of them predominant that gives the denomination, in which regard some are said to be of a sanguine, some of a phlegmatic, some of a choleric, and some of a melancholic constitution.

So it is also in the souls of men--though there be a general mixture and medley of all evil and corrupt qualities, yet there is some one sin which is usually paramount, which, like the prince of devils, is most powerful and prevalent, which sways and manifests itself more eminently and evidently than any other of them do. And as in every man's body there is a seed and principle of death, yet in some there is a proneness to one kind of disease more than another that may hasten death. So, though the root of sin and bitterness has spread itself over all, yet every man has his inclination to one kind of sin rather than another, and this may be called a man's besetting sin, his bosom sin, his darling sin. Now, it is one of the hardest works in this world to subdue and bring under control, this bosom sin! Oh! the prayers, the tears, the sighs, the sobs, the groans, the gripes that it will cost a Christian before he subdues this darling sin!

Look upon a rabbit's skin, how well it comes off until it comes to the head--but then what hauling and pulling is there before you can remove it! So it is in the mortifying, in the crucifying of sin; a man may easily subdue and mortify such and such sins--but when it comes to the head-sin, to the master-sin, to the bosom-sin, oh! what tugging and pulling is there! what striving and struggling is there to get off that sin, to get down that sin! Now, if the Lord, by smiting you in some near and dear enjoyment, shall draw out your heart to fall upon smiting of your master-sin, and shall so sanctify the affliction, as to make it issue in the mortification of your bosom corruption, what eminent cause will you have rather to bless him, than to sit down and murmur against him! And doubtless if you are dear to God, God will, by striking your dearest mercy, put you upon striking at your darling sin; and therefore do not murmur, even when God touches the apple of your eye!

(9.) Ninthly, consider That the Lord has many ways to make up the loss of a near and dear mercy to you. He can make up your loss in something else that may be better for you, and he will certainly make up your loss, either in kind or in worth, Matt. 19:27-30. He took from David an Absalom, and he gave him a Solomon; he took from him a Michal, and gave him a wise Abigail. He took from Job seven sons and three daughters, and afterwards he gives him seven more sons and three more daughters. He took from Job a

fair estate, and at last doubled it to him. He removed the bodily presence of Christ from his disciples--but gave them more abundantly of his spiritual presence, which was far the greater and the sweeter mercy. If Moses is taken away--a Joshua shall be raised in his place. If David is gathered to his fathers--a Solomon shall succeed him in his throne. If John the Baptist is cast into prison, rather than the pulpit shall stand empty, a greater than John, even Christ himself will begin to preach!

He who lives upon God in the loss of creature comforts, shall find all made up in the God of comforts; he shall be able to say, Though my child is not, my friend is not, my spouse is not--yet my God lives, and 'blessed be my rock,' Psalm 89:26. Though this mercy is not, and that mercy is not, yet covenant-mercies, yet 'the sure mercies of David' continue, 2 Sam. 23:5; these bed and board with me, these will go to the grave and to glory with me.

I have read of a godly man, who, living near a philosopher, did often persuade him to become a Christian. Oh! but, said the philosopher, I must, or may lose all for Christ. To which the godly man replied, if you lose anything for Christ, he will be sure to repay it a hundred-fold. Yes--but, said the philosopher, will you be bound for Christ, that if he does not pay me, you will? Yes, that I will, said the godly man. So the philosopher became a Christian, and the godly man entered into a written bond for performance of covenants. Some time after it happened that the philosopher fell sick on his deathbed, and, holding the bond in his hand, sent for the party engaged, to whom he gave up the bond, and said, Christ has paid all, there is nothing for you to pay, take your bond, and cancel it.

Christ will allow none of his children to suffer a loss; he has all, and he will make up all to them. In the close, Christ will pay the reckoning. No man shall ever have cause to say that he has been a loser by Christ. And, therefore, you have much cause to be mute, you have no cause to murmur, though God has snatched the fairest and the sweetest flower out of your bosom.

(10.) Tenthly, How can you tell but that which you call a near and dear mercy, if it had been continued longer to you, might have proved the greatest cross, the greatest calamity and misery, which you ever had? Our mercies, like choice wines, many times turn into vinegar. Our fairest hopes are often blasted. That very mercy which we once have said should be a staff to support us--has proved a sword to pierce us. How often have our most flourishing mercies withered in our hands, and our bosom contentments been turned into gall and wormwood! If God had continued the life of David's child to him, it would have been but a living monument of his sin and shame; and all that knew the child would have pointed at him, 'Yonder goes David's bastard child!--and so would have kept David's wound still a-bleeding, 2 Sam. 12:16.

Many parents have sought the lives of their children with tears--who have lived afterwards to see them take such wicked courses and come to such dismal ends--as have brought their grey head with sorrow to their graves! It had been ten thousand times a greater mercy to many parents to have buried their children as soon as they were born, than to see them come to such unhappy ends as they often do.

Well! Christian, it may be the Lord has taken from you such a hopeful son, or such a dear daughter, and you say--How can I hold my peace? But hark, Christian, hark! Would not every sin which they had committed against your gracious God caused a new throe in your soul? Would not every temptation which they had fallen before been as a dagger at your heart? Would not every affliction that should have befallen them been as a knife at your throat? What are those pains, and pangs, and throes of child-birth, compared to those after pains, pangs, and throes that might have been brought upon you by the sins and sufferings

of your children? Well! Christians, remain silent before the Lord, for you do not know what thorns in your eyes, what goads in your sides, nor what spears in your hearts--such near and dear mercies might have proved had they been longer continued.

(11.) Eleventhly, You can not tell how bad your heart might have proved under the enjoyment of those near and dear mercies, which now you have lost. Israel was very bad while they were in the wilderness--but they were much worse when they came to possess Canaan, that land of desires. Man's sin is apt to rise with outward prosperity. In the winter, men gird their clothes close about them--but in the summer they let them hang loose. In the winter of adversity, many a Christian girds his heart close to God, to Christ, to gospel, to godliness, to ordinances, to duties, etc., who in the summer of mercy hangs loose from all.

I have read of a pine tree, that, if the bark be pulled off, it will last a long time; but if the bark remains long on the tree--it rots the tree. Ah! how bad, how rotten, how base, would many have proved, had God not pulled off their bark of health, wealth, friendship! etc. Near and dear relations, they stick as close to us as the bark of a tree sticks to the tree, and if God should not pull off this bark, how apt should we be to rot and corrupt ourselves; therefore God is glad to bark us, and peel us, and strip us naked and bare of our dearest enjoyments and sweetest contentments, that so our souls, like the pine tree, may prosper and thrive the better.

Who can seriously consider of this, and not be silent, even then when God takes a jewel out of his bosom? Heap all the sweetest contentments and most desirable enjoyments of this world upon a man, they will not make him a Christian; heap them upon a Christian, they will not make him a better Christian. Many a Christian has been made worse by the good things of this world; but where is the Christian that has been bettered by them? Therefore be quiet when God strips you of them!

(12.) Twelfthly, and lastly, Get your heart more affected with spiritual losses--and then your soul will be less afflicted with those temporal losses that you mourn under. Have you lost nothing of that presence of God--that once you had in your heart? Have you lost none of those warnings, meltings, quickenings, and cheerings--which once you had? Have you lost nothing of your communion with God, nor of the joys of the Spirit, nor of that peace of conscience--which once you enjoyed? Have you lost none of that ground which once you had gained upon sin, Satan, and the world? Have you lost nothing of that holy vigor and heavenly heat--which once you had in your heart? If you have not, which would be a miracle, a wonder; why do you complain of this or that temporal loss? For what is this, but to complain of the loss of your purse, when your God is safe? If you are a loser in spirituals, why do you not rather complain that you have lost your God--than that you have lost your gold; and that you have lost your Christ--than that you have lost your husband; and that you have lost your child, and that you are damnified in spirituals--than that you are damnified in temporals? Do you mourn over the body, which the soul has left? mourn rather over the soul that God has forsaken, as Samuel did for Saul, says one. 1 Sam. 15:14, seq.

I have read of Honorius, a Roman emperor, who was simple and childish enough; when one told him Rome was lost, he was exceedingly grieved, and cried out, 'Alas! alas!' for he supposed that it was his hen which he had nicknamed Rome--which hen he exceedingly loved. But when it was told him, that it was his imperial city of Rome, which was besieged, and taken, and all the citizens plundered, and made a prey to the crude enraged soldiers--then his spirits were revived that his loss was not so great as he imagined.

Now, what is the loss of a husband, a wife, a child, a friend--to the loss of God, Christ, the Spirit--or the least measure of grace or communion with God? etc. I say, What are all such losses--but the loss of a hen--compared to the loss of Rome? And yet so simple and childish are many Christians, that they are more affected and afflicted with the loss of this and that poor temporal enjoyment--than they are with the loss of their most spiritual attainments! Ah, Christians! be but more affected with spiritual losses, and you will be more quiet and silent under temporal losses! Let the loss of Rome trouble you more--and then the loss of your hen will not trouble you at all. Let these things suffice for an answer to the second objection!

Objection 3. Oh--but my afflictions, my troubles have been LONG upon me! and how then can I hold my peace? Were they but of yesterday, I would be quiet; but they are of a long continuance; and therefore how can I be silent? To this I answer,

(1.) First, You cannot date your afflictions from the first day of your pollution. You have been polluted from the womb--but you have not been afflicted from the womb, Psalm 51:5. Many have been the days, the years, since you was born in sin--but few have been the days, the years, that you have experienced sorrow. You cannot easily number the days of your sinning--but you can easily number the days of your sufferings. You cannot number your days of mercy--but you can easily number your days of calamity. You cannot number your days of health--but you can easily count your days of sickness.

(2.) Secondly, Your afflictions are not so long as the afflictions of other saints. COMPARE your winter nights and other saints' winter nights together; your storms and troubles and other saints' storms and troubles together; your losses and other saints' losses together; your miseries and other saints' miseries together. Your afflictions are but as a moment--they are but as yesterday compared with the afflictions of other saints, whose whole lives have been made up of sorrows and sufferings--as the life of Christ was. Many a man's life has been nothing but a lingering death--Job 21:25, 'And another dies in the bitterness of his soul, and never eats with pleasure.' There are those that have never a good day all their days--who have not a day of rest among all their days of trouble; nor a day of health among all their days of sickness; nor a day of gladness among all their days of sadness; nor a day of strength among all their days of weakness; nor a day of honor among all their days of reproach; whose whole life is one continued winter's night, who every day drink gall and wormwood, who lie down sighing, who rise groaning, and who spend their days in complaining, 'No sorrow like our sorrow, no sufferings like our sufferings!' Some there be who have always tears in their eyes, sorrows in their hearts, rods on their backs, and crosses in their hands--but it is not so with you! Therefore be silent.

(3.) Thirdly, The longer your affliction has been, the sweeter will heaven be to you at last. The longer the Israelites had been in the wilderness, the sweeter was Canaan to them at last; the longer the storm, the sweeter the calm; the longer the winter nights, the sweeter the summer days. Long afflictions will much set off the glory of heaven. The harbor is most sweet and desirable to those who have been long tossed upon the seas; so will heaven be to those who have been long in a sea of trouble. The new wine of Christ's kingdom is most sweet to those that have been long a-drinking of gall and vinegar, Luke 22:18. The crown of glory will be most delightful to those who have been long in combating with the world, the flesh, and the devil. The longer our journey is--the sweeter will be our end; and the longer our passage is--the sweeter will our haven be. The higher the mountain--the gladder we shall be when we are got to the top of it. The longer the heir is kept from his inheritance--the more delight he will have when he comes to possess it.

(4.) Fourthly, They are not long--but short--if compared to that eternity of glory that is reserved for the saints, 2 Cor. 4:16-18. If you turn to the words, you shall find for affliction, glory; for light afflictions, a

weight of glory; and for short momentary afflictions, eternal glory. There will quickly be an end of your sadness--but there will never be an end of your happiness. There will soon be an end of your calamity and misery--but there will never be an end of your felicity and glory. The kingdoms of this world are not lasting, much less are they everlasting; they have all their final years--but the kingdom of heaven is an everlasting kingdom; of that there is no end. There are seven sorts of crowns that were in use among the Roman victors--but they were all fading and perishing; but the crown of glory that at last God will set upon the heads of his saints, shall continue as long as God himself continues. Who can look upon those eternal mansions that are above, and those everlasting pleasures that be at God's right hand, and say that his affliction is long? Well, Christian, let your affliction be ever so long, yet one hour's being in the bosom of Christ will make you forget both the length and strength of all your afflictions!

(5.) Fifthly, The longer you have been afflicted--the more in spiritual experiences you have been enriched. 2 Cor. 1:5, 'For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us--so our consolation also abounds by Christ.' The lower the ebb--the higher the tide; the more pain--the more gain; the more afflicted--the more comforted; the lower we are cast down--the higher we shall be raised. Of all Christians, none so rich in spiritual experiences--as those that have been long in the school of affliction. Oh! the blessed stories that such call tell of the power of God supporting them, of the wisdom of God directing them, of the favor of God comforting them, of the presence of God assisting them. Oh! the love-tokens, the love-letters, the bracelets, the jewels which they are able to produce, since they have been in the furnace of affliction.

Oh! the sin that long afflictions have discovered and mortified. Oh! the temptations that long afflictions have prevented and vanquished. You shall as soon number the stars of heaven and the sands of the sea, as you shall number up the heavenly experiences of such Christians that have been long under afflictions. The afflicted Christian's heart is fullest of spiritual treasure. Though he may be poor in the world, yet he is rich in faith and holy experiences, James 2:5; and what are all the riches of this world to spiritual experiences? One spiritual experience is more worth than a world, and upon a dying bed and before a judgment-seat, every man will be of this opinion.

The men of this world will with much quietness and calmness of spirit bear much, and suffer much, and suffer long, when they find their sufferings to add to their revenues; and shall nature do more than grace? It is the common voice of nature, 'Who will show us any good' Psalm 4:6; how shall we come to be great, and high, and rich in the world? We care not what we suffer, nor how long we suffer--so we may but add house to house, heap to heap, bag to bag, and land to land, Isa 5:8. Oh how much more then should Christians be quiet and calm under all their afflictions, though they are never so long, considering that they do but add jewels to a Christian's crown; they do but add to his spiritual experiences. The long afflicted Christian has the fullest and the greatest trade; and in the day of account, will be found the richest man.

(6.) Sixthly, Long afflictions sometimes are but preparations to long-lived mercies. Joseph's thirteen years' imprisonment was but a preparative to eighty years, reigning like a king; David's seven years' banishment was but a preparative to forty years' reigning in much honor and glory; Job's long afflictions were but preparatives to more long-lived mercies, as you may see in that last of Job; and those sad and sore trials that the Jews have been under, for above these sixteen hundred years, are to prepare them for those matchless mercies, and those endless glories, in some sense, that God in the latter days will crown them with "O afflicted city, lashed by storms and not comforted, I will build you with stones of turquoise, your foundations with sapphires. I will make your battlements of rubies, your gates of sparkling jewels, and all your walls of precious stones. All your sons will be taught by the Lord, and great will be your children's peace. In righteousness you will be established: Tyranny will be far from you; you will have nothing to fear.

Terror will be far removed; it will not come near you. Isaiah 54:11-14.

Though they have been long afflicted and tossed, yet they shall at last upon glorious foundations be established; God will not only raise them out of their distressed estate wherein now they are--but he will advance them to a most eminent and glorious condition in this world; they shall be very glorious, and outshine all the world in spiritual excellencies and outward dignities--Isaiah 60:14, 16, 'The sons also of those who afflicted you shall come bending unto you, and all those who despised you shall bow themselves down at the soles of your feet--and they shall call you, the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through you, I will make you an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations.'

Ah, Christians! do not mutter nor murmur under your long afflictions, for you do not know but that by these long afflictions God may prepare and fit you for such favors and blessings that may never have end. By long afflictions God many times prepares his people for temporal, spiritual, and eternal mercies. If God by long afflictions makes more room in your soul for himself, his Son, his Spirit, his word; if by long afflictions he shall crucify your heart more to the world and to your relations, and frame and fashion your soul more for celestial enjoyments; have you any cause to murmur? Surely not! But,

(7) Seventhly, The longer a saint is afflicted on earth--the more glorious he shall shine in heaven. The more affliction here--the more glory hereafter. This truth may be thus made out:

[1.] First, The more gracious souls are afflicted, the more their graces are exercised and increased, Heb. 12:10, Rom. 5:3-5. Now, the more grace here, the more glory hereafter; the higher in grace, the higher in glory. Grace differs nothing from glory but in name--grace is glory in the bud, and glory is grace at the full. Glory is nothing but the perfection of grace. Heavenly happiness is nothing but the perfection of holiness. Grace is glory in the seed--and glory is grace in the flower. Grace is glory militant--and glory is grace triumphant. Grace and glory differ in degree--not kind. Now, it is most certain that the more gracious souls are afflicted--the more their graces are exercised; and the more grace is exercised--the more it is increased, as I have sufficiently demonstrated in this treatise already. But,

[2.] Secondly, The longer a gracious soul is afflicted, the more his pious duties will be multiplied. Psalm 109:4, 'In return for my friendship they accuse me; but I give myself unto prayer;' or as the Hebrew reads it, 'But I am prayer,' or 'a man of prayer.' In times of afflictions a Christian is all prayer; he is never so much a man of prayer, a man given up to prayer--as in times of affliction. A Christian is never so frequent, so fervent, so abundant in the work of the Lord, as when he is afflicted. 'Lord! in trouble have they visited you, they poured out prayer when your chastening was upon them.' Now, they do not only pray--but they pour out prayer; they were freely, largely, and abundantly in prayer when the rod was upon them. Look! as men plentifully pour out water for the quenching of a fire, so did they plentifully pour out their prayers before the Lord. And as affliction puts a man upon being much in prayer, so it puts him upon other duties of religion answerably. Now, this is most certain, that though God will reward no man for his works, yet he will reward every man according to his works--1 Cor. 15:58, 'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord!' 2 Cor. 9:6, 'But this I say, he who sows sparingly shall reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall reap bountifully;' or he who sows in benedictions or blessings shall reap in benedictions, as it runs in the original.

It is an excellent observation of Calvin upon God's rewarding the Rechabites' obedience, Jer. 35:19; God, says he, often recompenses the shadows and seeming-appearance of virtue, to show what delight he takes in the ample rewards he has reserved for true and sincere piety. Now, if the longer a Christian is afflicted, the more his pious services will be multiplied, and the more they are multiplied, the more his glory at last will be increased--then the longer a saint is afflicted on earth, the more glory he shall have when he comes to heaven. But,

[3.] Thirdly, The longer any saint is afflicted, the more into the image and likeness of Christ he will be transformed. It is one of God's great designs and ends in afflicting of his people, to make them more conformable to his Son; and God will not lose his end. Men often lose theirs--but God never has nor will lose his; and experience tells us that God does every day, by afflictions, accomplish his end upon his people. The longer they are afflicted, the more they are made conformable to Christ in meekness, lowliness, spiritualness, heavenliness, in faith, love, self-denial, pity, compassion, etc. Now certainly, the more like to Christ, the more beloved of Christ. The more a Christian is like to Christ, the more he is the delight of Christ; and the more like to Christ on earth, the nearer the soul shall sit to Christ in heaven. Nothing makes a man more conformable to Christ than afflictions.

Many would wear the crown with Christ, that do not care for bearing the cross with Christ. But,

(8.) Eighthly, Impatience will but lengthen out the day of the sorrows. Every impatient act adds one link more to the chain; every act of frowardness adds one lash more to those that have already been laid out; every act of muttering will but add stroke to stroke, and sting to sting; every act of murmuring will but add burden to burden, and storm to storm. The most compendious way to lengthen out your long afflictions is to fret, and vex, and murmur under them. As you would see a speedy end of your long afflictions, sit mute and silent under them.

(9.) Ninthly, God's time is the best time; mercy is never nearer. Salvation is at hand, deliverance is at the door, when a man's heart is brought into such a frame as to be freely willing that God should time his mercy and time his deliverance for him, Acts 27:13-44. The physician's time is the best time for the patient to have ease. The impatient patient cries out to his physician, Oh! sir, a little ease, a little refreshment! Oh the pains, the tortures, that I am under! Oh, sir, I think every hour two, and every two ten, until comfort comes, until refreshment comes! But the prudent physician has turned the hour-glass, and is resolved that this medicine shall work so long, though his patient frets, flings, roars, tears. So, when we are under afflictions, we are apt to cry out, How long, Lord, shall it be before ease comes, before deliverance comes? Oh the tortures, oh the torments, that we are under! Lord, a little refreshment! Oh how long are these nights! oh how tedious are these days! But God has turned our glass, and he will not hearken to our cry until our glass be out. After all our fretting and flinging, we must wait his time, who knows best when to deliver us, and how to deliver us, out of all our troubles, and who will not stay a moment when the glass is out that he has turned. But,

(10.) Tenthly, and lastly, They shall last no longer than there is need, and then they shall work for your good. It is with souls as it is with bodies; some bodies are more easily and more suddenly cured than others are, and so are some souls. God will not allow the plaster to lie one day, no--not one hour, no--not a moment, longer than there is need. Some flesh heals quickly; proud flesh is long a-healing. By affliction God quickly heals some--but others are long a-healing--1 Pet. 1:6, 'If need be, you are in heaviness, through manifold trials,' or through various afflictions. The burden shall lie no longer upon you than needs must; your pain shall endure no longer than needs must; your illness shall make you no longer sick than

needs must, etc. Your heavenly Father is a physician, as wise as he is loving. When your heart begins to grow high--he sees there is need of some heavy affliction to bring it low; when your heart grows cold--he sees there is need of some fiery affliction to heat it and warm it; when your heart grows dull and dead--he sees there is need of some sharp affliction to enliven and quicken it. And as your afflictions shall continue no longer than there is need, so they shall last no longer than they shall work for your good. If all along they shall work for your good, you have no cause to complain that your afflictions are long. That they shall thus work, I have fully proved in the former part of this book. And thus much for answer to the third objection.

Objection 4. I would be mute and silent under my afflictions--but my afflictions daily MULTIPLY and increase upon me; like the waves of the sea, they come rolling over the neck of one another, etc.; and how then can I hold my peace? How can I lay my hand upon my mouth, when the sorrows of my heart are daily increased? To this I answer thus:

(1.) First, Your afflictions are not so many as your sins, Psalm 51:12. Your sins are as the stars of heaven, and as the sand upon the sea, that cannot be numbered. There are three things that no Christian can number--

1. his sins;
2. divine favors;
3. the joys and pleasures which are at Christ's right hand.

But there is no Christian so poor an accountant--but that he may quickly sum up the number of his troubles and afflictions in this world. Your sins, O Christian, are like the Syrians that filled the country--but your afflictions are like the two little flocks of goats which grazed before them, 1 Kings 20:27; therefore remain silent before the Lord.

(2) Secondly, If such should not be mute and silent under their afflictions, whose afflictions are increased and multiplied upon them, there are none in the world who will be found mute and silent under their afflictions--for certainly there are none who do not find the waters of affliction to grow daily upon them. If this be not so, what means the bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen? 1 Sam. 15:14. What means the daily sighs, groans, and complaints of Christians, if their troubles, like the waters in Ezekiel's sanctuary, be not still increasing upon them? Ezek. 47:1, 20. Every day brings us tidings of new straits, new troubles, new crosses, new losses, new trials, etc.

(3.) Thirdly, Your afflictions are not so many as God MIGHT have exercised you with. God could as easily exercise you with ten as with two, and with a hundred as with ten, and with a thousand as with a hundred. Let your afflictions be ever so many--yet they are not so many as they might have been, had God either consulted with your sins, with your deserts, or with his own justice. There is no comparison between those afflictions which God has inflicted upon you, and those that he might have inflicted. You have not one burden of a thousand that God could have laid on--but he would not; therefore remain silent before the Lord.

(4.) Fourthly, Your afflictions are not so many as your mercies, no, they are not to be named in the day wherein your mercies are spoken of. What are your crosses to your comforts, your miseries to your mercies, your days of sickness to your days of health, your days of weakness to the days of strength, your

days of scarcity to your days of plenty? And this is that the wise man would have us seriously to consider--Eccles. 7:14, 'In the day of adversity consider,'--but what must we consider? --'that God has set the one over against the other.' As God has set winter and summer, night and day, fair weather and foul, one over against another; so let us set our present mercies over against our present troubles, and we shall presently find that our mercies exceed our troubles, that they mightily over-balance our present afflictions; therefore let us be silent, let us lay our hands upon our mouths.

(5.) Fifthly, If you cast up a just and righteous account, you will find that they are not so many as the afflictions which have befallen other saints. Have you reckoned up the afflictions which befell Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Asaph, Haman, the prophets and apostles? If you have, you will say that your afflictions are no afflictions, compared to those which have befallen them. Their lives were filled up with sorrows and sufferings--but so are not yours; therefore kiss the rod and be silent. It may be, If you look upon your relations, your friends, your neighbors, you may find many whose afflictions for number and weight do much outweigh yours; therefore be silent, murmur not, hold your peace.

(6.) Sixthly, You have not so many afflictions as attended our Lord Jesus; whose whole life, from the cradle to the cross, was nothing but a life of sufferings. Osorius, writing of the sufferings of Christ, says, That the crown of thorns bored his head with seventy-two wounds. Many seventy-two afflictions did Christ meet with while he was in this world. None can be ignorant of this who have but read the New Testament. He is called 'a man of sorrows;' his whole life was filled up with sorrows. When he was but a little past thirty years of age, sorrows, pains, troubles, oppositions, persecutions, had so worn him, that the Jews judged him to be towards fifty years old, John 8:57. A man were as good compare the number of his bosom friends with the stars of heaven, as compare his afflictions and the afflictions of Christ together.

(7.) Seventhly, Muttering and murmuring will but add to the number. When the child is under the rod, his crying and fretting does but add lash to lash, blow to blow; but of this, enough before.

(8.) Eighthly, and lastly, Though afflictions are many, yet they are not so many as the joys, the pleasures, the delights that are at Christ's right hand. As the pleasures of heaven are matchless and endless, so they,

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