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THE
Crook in the Lot:

OR, THE
SOVEREIGNTY AND WISDOM OF GOD

IN THE
Afflictions of Men, displayed;

TOGETHER WITH
A CHRISTIAN DEPARTMENT under them.

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF
SEVERAL SERMONS

On *Eecl. vii. 13. Prov. xvi. 19. and 1 Pet. v. 6.*

By the Reverend and Learned
MR. THOMAS BOSTON,
LATE MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT EYTRICK.

*Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord
delivereth him out of them all, Psalm xxxiv. 19.*

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Reverend Mr. THOMAS BOSTON, is already so well known in the Christian Church, by his many elaborate, judicious, and useful writings, that to say any thing either in commendation of him, or any of his performances, would be altogether superfluous. Let it suffice to say, that this valuable Treatise, now again offered to the Public, hath already gone through a number of impressions, and deservedly well relished: and has been extremely useful, especially to all those who have laboured under affliction.

We are very certain it was among his last works in composition, when he had fallen into a declining state of health; and among the last pieces he had begun to revise and prepare for the press, with his own hand, being warmly solicited thereto, as he himself acquaints us, in his Memoirs, by a letter he received from his very intimate friend, Mr. Hogg, dated Nov. 13th, 1731.

As the Lord hath made these subjects useful to his own soul, during the composition of them, for the benefit of his own flock, in his afflicted state; he the more readily complied with the request of publishing them; and when he had any intervals of his trouble, began to look over his notes for publication, and had made some progress in the work; but got it not completely finished, being prevented by his growing indisposition, and being removed by death, on May 13th, 1732.

What remained was transcribed after his death by another hand; and first published in the year 1737, with the following recommendatory Preface, by three of his dear friends who subscribe it.

* In the year 1730 and 1731, as we learn from his Memoirs.

Though they acquaint us, that the Crook in the Lot was amongst the last subjects the Author handled and amongst his last works with the pen; yet they do not tell us how far he himself revised that performance, and where they began. However, the intelligent readers of Mr. Boston's different tracts, prepared for the press, and published by himself in his life-time, will be at no loss to perceive how far he proceeded in revising this piece, by his pointing out, as usual, the emphatical words and phrases in Italic characters, or inverted commas; which, in the first edition of the book, we see has only been done in the first doctrine.

In order to make the whole of this impression as uniform as possible, an attempt has been made to point out the emphasis throughout the whole. The edition now offered to the Public is carefully corrected by the first original one, and freed of several inaccuracies that had crept into some late impressions.

EDINBURGH,
1st August 1795.

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P R E F A C E.

MR. THOMAS BOSTON, the youngest of seven children, born 1676, of creditable, religious parents, in the town of Dunse, where they had some heritage; he was licensed to preach 1697; ordained minister at Simprin* 1699; married 1700, to Catherine Brown; of good extract, in the parish of Culross; a gentlewoman of singular wisdom, and many rare endowments, (by whom he had a good many children, of whom two sons, and two daughters survive them; transported to Ettrick† 1707; died 1732, near five years before his spouse§, in the 56th year of his age.

He was of a stature above the middle size, of a venerable amiable aspect, with his own hair originally black, of a strong and fruitful genius, of a lively imagination, (such as affords what is called *ready wit*, which, instead of cultivating, he laid under a severe restraint;) of tender affections, a clear and solid judgment; his temper candid, mo-

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* *The smallest charge of a country parish perhaps in Scotland, not being quite ninety examinable persons in his time.*

† *One succeeded his father, in name, office, and charge.*

‡ *One of the remotest and wildest places in the south of Scotland.*

§ *Among her other uncommon excellencies, she was eminent for her exemplary bearing of affliction, under which she was bowed down, well nigh as long as that daughter of Abraham, mentioned in Luke xiii. 11.*

dest, cautious, benevolent, obliging, and courteous; had a natural aversion to any thing rude or uncivil in words or behaviour, and a delicate feeling in case of meeting with ought of that sort; could be heavy with, and severe in his words, when there was just occasion, or he judged the same necessary.

He was early called by divine grace; all along afterwards exercised unto godliness; walked indeed with God in all his ways; daily acknowledging him; frequent in solemn extraordinary applications to heaven, (*viz.* upon every new emergent of duty, difficulty, or trial,) followed with evident, comfortable, and confirming testimonies of divine acceptance and audience; a diligent, judicious observer, recorder, and improver of the dispensations of divine providence, in connection with the word, his own frame and walk, and consequently of great experience in religion: He was accurately and extensively regardful of the divine law, in all manner of life and conversation (even in things that escape the notice of most part of Christians,) of a tender conscience, carefully watching against and avoiding the appearance of evil; compassionate and sympathizing with the distressed; charitable to the needy, (to the degree of religiously setting apart the tenth of his worldly substance yearly for their supply;) a dutiful husband, an indulgent father, a sincere, a faithful, and an affectionate friend; to which he had a particular cast in his temper, which proved a rich blessing to them who were favoured with his friendship.

He was a considerable scholar in all the parts of theological learning, and excelled in some of them. What he was for a humanist, (even towards the latter end of his days) his translation of his own work, on the Hebrew accentuation, into good Ro-

man Latin, will abundantly testify: He was well seen in the Greek; and for the skill he attained in the Hebrew, he will, we are satisfied, in ages to come be admired, and had in honour by the learned world; especially when it is understood under what disadvantages, in what obscurity and seclusion from learned assistances, the work was composed; and when it is considered how far, notwithstanding, he has outstripped all that went before him in that study, namely, of the Hebrew accentuation. He understood the French; and for the sake of comparing translations, could read the Dutch Bible. There were few pieces of learning that he had not some good taste of; but all his knowledge behoved to be otherwise discovered than by his professing of it. He was a hard student, of indefatigable application; so that whatever he was once heartily engaged in, he knew not to quit, till, by help from heaven, and incessant labour, he got through it. He had a great knowledge and understanding of human nature, of the most proper methods of addressing it, and of the most likely handles for catching hold of it.

He had an admirable talent at drawing a paper, which made a statesman*, a very able judge, say, (when Mr. Boston was clerk to the synod of Merse and Tiviotdale) that he was the best clerk he had ever known in any court, civil or ecclesiastical. An admirer of other men's parts and gifts, liberally giving them their due praise, even though in some things they differed from him; far from censorious, assuming, or detracting.

As a minister, he had on his spirit a deep and high sense of divine things; was mighty in the scriptures, in his acquaintance with the letter,

* *Mr. Baillic of Jerviswood.*

with the spirit, and sense of them, in happily applying and accommodating them, for explaining and illustrating the subject. His knowledge and insight into the mystery of Christ was great, though a humbling sense of his want of it was like to have quite sunk and laid him by, after he begun to preach. He had a peculiar talent for going deep into the mysteries of the gospel: and at the same time, making them plain, making intelligible their connection with, and influence upon gospel holiness; notable instances of which may be seen in his most valuable treatise of the Covenant, and in his sermons of Christ in the form of a servant.

His invention was rich, but judiciously bounded; his thoughts were always just, and often new; his expressions proper and pure; his illustrations and similes often surprising; his method natural and clear; his delivery grave and graceful, with an air of earnestness, meekness, assurance, and authority, tempered together. No wonder his ministrations in holy things were all of them dear and precious to the saints.

He was fixed and established, upon solid and rational grounds, in the reformation principles, in opposition to popery, prelacy, superstition, and persecution; he was pleasant and lively in conversation, but always with a decorum to his character: quite free of that sourness of temper, or *ascetical* rigidity, that generally possesses men of a retired life.

He fed and watched with diligence the flock over which the Holy Ghost made him overseer; and notwithstanding his eager pursuit of that study, which was his delight, he abated nothing of his preparation for the Sabbath, nor of his work abroad in the parish; nor did he so much as use

the short-hand, whereof he was master, but always wrote out his sermons fair, and generally as full as he preached them; far from serving the Lord with that which cost him nothing. It was his delight to spend and be spent in the service of the gospel: was a faithful, and at the same time a prudent reprovcr of sin; was endued with a rich treasure of Christian wisdom and prudence, without craft or guile, whereby he was exceeding serviceable in judicatories, and excellently fitted for counsel in intricate cases.

Zeal and knowledge were in him united to a pitch rarely to be met with; had a joint concern for purity and peace in the church; no man more zealous for the former, and at the same time more studious of the latter, having observed and felt so much of the mischief of division and separation. He was exceeding cautious and scrupulous of any thing new or unprecedented, until he was thoroughly satisfied of its necessity and grounds.

It was his settled mind, that solidly and strongly to establish the truth, was, in many cases, the best, the shortest, and the most effectual way to confute error, without irritating and inflaming the passions of men, to their own and to the truth's prejudice: therefore, in his explication and vindication of the Protestant doctrine, in a paroxism quarrelled and condemned in a certain book, he answered all and every body, but took notice expressly of no body*. He obeyed the voice, 1 Tim. vi. 11. *But thou, O man of God, flee these things*: Being in an uncommon degree dead to the world; finding, says he, in the account of this life, the business of it ensnaring to my mind, I had neither heart nor

* Alluding to his notes on the Marrow of Modern Divinity.

hand for it. On all which accounts he was much respected and regarded by not only his brethren, that differed from him, but generally by all sorts of men.

To conclude ; he was a scribe singularly instructed unto the kingdom ;—happy in finding out acceptable words ;—a workman that needed not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth ;—a burning and a shining light. *The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance.*

Though a skilful hand might, in fewer words, have drawn his character to much better purpose, there is no partiality by overdoing in what is said, if intimate friendship for many years, and the account of his own life, done by himself, are allowed for competent evidences : But the hearing him preach one sermon would have said something that cannot be said now.

His removal, in the juncture wherein he was taken away, some are satisfied, had, on several accounts, more of the divine anger in it with respect to this church, than is commonly apprehended.

It might have been more edifying, had there been room for it here, to have heard of him in his own words, from the general account of his life, by him addressed to his children : Out of which we shall, with their leave, subjoin only a few touches towards the close of it, as follows :

“ Thus also I was much addicted to peace, and
 “ averse from controversy ; though once engaged
 “ therein, I was set to go through with it,* I had
 “ no great difficulty to retain a due honour and
 “ charity for my brethren, differing from me in o-
 “ pinion and practice : But then I was in no great

* *The Controversy relative to the Marrow Doctrines.*

"hazard neither of being swayed by them to de-
 "part from what I judged truth or duty. Withal,
 "it was easy to me to yield to them in things where-
 "in I found not myself in conscience bound up.
 "Whatever precipitant steps I have made in the
 "course of my life, which I desire to be humbled
 "for, rashness in conduct was not my weak side.
 "But since the Lord, by his grace, brought me to
 "consider things, it was much my exercise to dis-
 "cern sin and duty in particular cases, being afraid
 "to venture on things, until I should see myself
 "called thereto : but when the matter was cleared
 "to me, I generally stuck fast by it, being as much
 "afraid to desert the way which I took to be point-
 "ed out to me. I never had the art of making
 "rich, nor could I ever heartily apply myself to
 "the managing of secular affairs ; even the secular
 "way of managing the discipline of the church was
 "so unacceptable to me, that I had no heart to dip
 "in the public church management. What ap-
 "pearances I made, at any time, in these matters,
 "were not readily in that way." He concludes :

"And thus have I given some account of the
 "days of my vanity.—Upon the whole, I bless my
 "God, in Jesus, that ever he made me a Christian,
 "and took an early dealing with my soul ; that
 "ever he made me a minister of the gospel, and
 "gave me some insight into the doctrine of his
 "grace, and that ever he gave me the blest Bible,
 "and brought me acquainted with the originals,
 "and especially with the Hebrew text. The world
 "hath long been a stepdame to me ; and whatso-
 "ever I would have attempted to nestle in it, there
 "was a thorn of uneasiness laid for me. Man is
 "born crying, lives complaining, and dies disap-
 "pointed from that quarter. *All is vanity and vex-*
 "*ation of spirit. I have waited for thy salvation,*
 "*O Lord."*

Habitual unreconciledness to the cross, and a palpable deficiency in many of the duties incumbent on us, as members of the body of Christ, mightily mar our Christian comfort, our edification, our usefulness: And, instead of adorning, they cast a dark shade on our holy profession. For remedy in both cases, the Lord in his kind providence, is sending us fresh assistance in the two following treatises. Both the subjects are set in a new and in an engaging light. It is not amiss that the reader should know, that the former, namely, that of the *Crook in one's Lot*, was among the last subjects the blessed author handled; and that the revising of it so far, for he got not through his notes, was amongst his last works with the pen.* We shall leave it to exercise the reader's attention how far he himself revised; and where we have only his notes as he preached them. May the same divine blessing, which the author often and earnestly sought to accompany aught of his that was, or should be called forth for the service of the church, go along with these treatises that here follow!

ALEX. COLDEN.

GAB. WILSON.

H. DAVIDSON.

* *The Prefacers of the First Edition of this excellent Tract, published, along with it, some Sermons on the Nature of Church Communion; but it is only the Crook in the Lot, the author's last genuine work, which has proved so savoury to many in distress.*

CROOK IN THE LOT.

—
ECC. vii. 13.

Consider the work of God: For who can make that straight which he hath made crooked?

A JUST view of afflicting incidents is altogether necessary to a Christian deportment under them: And that view is to be obtained only by faith, not by sense. For, it is the light of the *word* alone that represents them justly, discovering in them the work of God, and consequently designs becoming the divine perfections. These perceived by the eye of faith, and duly considered, one has a just view of afflicting incidents, fitted to quell the turbulent motions of corrupt affections under dismal outward appearances.

It is under this view that Solomon, in the preceding part of this chapter, advances several paradoxes, which are surprising determinations in favour of certain things, that, to the eye of sense, looking gloomy and hideous, are therefore generally reputed grievous and shocking. He pronounceth *the day of one's death to be better than the day of his birth*; namely, the day of the death of one, who, having become the friend of God through faith, had led a life to the honour of God, and service of his generation, and thereby raised to himself the good and savoury *name better than*

precious ointment, ver. 1. In like manner, he pronounceth *the house of mourning*, to be preferable to *the house of feasting*, *sorrow to laughter*, and a *wise man's rebuke to a fool's song*; for that, howbeit the latter are indeed the more pleasant, yet the former are the more profitable, ver. 2—5. And observing with concern, how men are in hazard, not only from the world's frowns and ill usage, *oppression making a wise man mad*, but also from its smiles and caresses, *a gift destroyeth the heart*; therefore, since whatever way it goes, there is danger, he pronounceth *the end of every worldly thing better than the beginning thereof*, ver. 7, 8. And from the whole, he justly infers, that it is better to be humble and patient, than proud and impatient, under afflicting dispensations; since, in the former case, one wisely submits to what is really best; in the latter, he fights against it, ver. 8. And he departs from being angry with our lot, because of the adversity found therein, ver. 9; cautions against making curious comparisons of former and present times, in that point insinuating undue reflections on the providence of God, ver. 10. and, against that querulous and fretful disposition, he first prescribes a general remedy, namely, holy wisdom, as that which enables one to make the best of every thing, and even giveth life in killing circumstances, ver. 11, 12. And then a particular remedy, consisting in a due application of that wisdom, towards the taking a just view of the case, *Consider the work of God: For who can make that straight which he hath made crooked?*

In which words is proposed, 1. The remedy itself; 2. The suitableness thereof.

First, The *remedy* itself, is a wise eyeing of the hand of God in all we find to bear hard upon us:

Consider the work (or, see thou the doing) of God, viz. in the crooked, rough, and disagreeable parts of thy lot, the crosses thou findest in it. Thou seest very well the cross itself; yea, thou turnest it over and over in thy mind, and leisurely views it on all sides; thou lookest withal to this and the other second cause of it, and so thou art in a foam and a fret: But, wouldst thou be quieted and satisfied in the matter, lift up thine eyes towards heaven, see the doing of God in it, the operation of his hand: Look at that, and consider it well; eye the first cause of the crook in thy lot; behold how it is the work of God, his doing.

Secondly, As for the Suitableness of this remedy, that view of the crook in our lot is very suitable to still indecent risings of heart, and quiet us under it: "For who can (that is, none can) make that straight which God hath made crooked?" As to the crook in thy lot, God hath made it; and it must continue while he will have it so. Shouldst thou ply thine utmost force to even it, or make it straight, thine attempt will be vain: It will not alter for all thou canst do; only he who made it can mend it, or make it straight. This consideration, this view of the matter, is a proper means, at once, to silence and to satisfy men, and so to bring them unto a dutiful submission to their Maker and Governor, under the crook in their lot.

Now, we take up the purpose of the text in these three doctrines.

DOCT. I. Whatsoever crook there is in one's lot, it is of God's making.

DOCT. II. What God sees meet to mar, one will not be able to mend in his lot.

DOCT. III. The considering the crook in the lot, as the work of God, or of his making, is a

proper means to bring one to a Christian deportment under it.

DOCT. I. *Whatever crook there is in one's lot, it is of God's making.*

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

I. As to the *crook* itself, the crook in the lot; for the better understanding thereof, these few things that follow are premised.

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

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

3. Every body's lot in this world hath some *crook* in it. Complainers are apt to make odious comparisons; they look about, and taking a *distant* view of the condition of others, can discern nothing in it but what is *straight*, and just to one's wish; so they pronounce their neighbour's lot wholly straight. But that is a false verdict; there is no perfection here; no lot out of heaven with-

out a crook. For, as to "all the works that are done under the sun, behold all is vanity and vexation of spirit. That which is crooked cannot be made straight." Eccl. i. 14, 15. Who would have thought but Haman's lot was very straight, while his family was in a flourishing condition, and he prospering in riches and honour, being prime minister of state in the Persian court, and standing high in the king's favour? Yet there was, at the same time, a crook in his lot, which so galled him, that "all this availed him nothing." Esth. v. 13. Every one feels for himself, where he is pinched, though others perceive it not. No body's lot, in this world, is wholly crooked; there are always some straight and even parts it. Indeed, when men's passions, having got up, have cast a mist over their minds, they are ready to say, *all* is wrong with them, *nothing* right; but though in hell that tale is, and ever will be true, yet it is never true in this world; for *there*, indeed, there is not a drop of comfort allowed, Luke xvi. 25. but *here* it always holds good, that "it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed," Lam. iii. 22.

4. The crook in the lot came into the world by *sin*: it was owing to the fall, Rom. v. 12. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; under which death, the crook in the lot is comprehended, as a state of *comfort* or *prosperity*, is, in scripture style, exprest by *living*, 1 Sam. xxv. 6. John iv. 50. 51. Sin so bowed the hearts and minds of men, as they became crooked in respect of the holy law; and God justly so bowed their lot, as it became crooked too. And this crook in our lot inseparably follows our sinful condition, till, dropping this body of sin and death, we get within heaven's gates.

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

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

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

1. One made by a *cross dispensation*, which, howsoever in itself, passing, yet hath lasting effects. Such a crook did Herod's cruelty make in the lot of the mothers in Bethlehem, who by the murderers were left "weeping for their slain children, and "would not be comforted, because they were not"

Mat. ii. 18. A slip of the foot may soon be made, which will make a man go halting all along after. "As the fishes are taken in an evil net,—So are the "sons of men shared in an evil time," Eccl. ix. 12. The thing may fall out in a moment, under which the party shall go halting to the grave.

2. There is a crook made by a *train* of cross dispensations; whether of the same or different kinds, following hard one upon another, and leaving lasting effects behind them. Thus in the case of Job, while one messenger of evil tidings *was yet speaking, another came*, Job i. 16—18. Cross events coming, one upon the neck of another, *deep calling unto deep*, make a sore crook. In that case the party is like unto one, who recovering his sliding foot from one unfirm piece of ground, sets it on another equally unfirm, which immediately gives way under him too: or, like unto one, who travelling in an unknown mountaneous tract, after having, with difficulty, made his way over one mountain, is expecting to see the plain country; but instead thereof there comes in view, time after time, a new mountain to be passed. This crook in Asaph's lot had like to have made him give up all his religion, *until he went into the sanctuary*, where this mystery of providence was unriddled to him, Psal. lxxiii. 13—17. Solomon observes, "That "there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked," Eccl. viii. 14. Providence taking a run against them, as if they were to be run down for good and all. Whoever they be, whose life in no part thereof affords them experience of this, sure Joseph missed not of it in his young days, nor Jacob in his middle days, nor Peter in his old days, nor our Saviour all his days.

3. There is a crook made by one cross dispensation, with *lasting effects* thereof coming into the room of another removed. Thus one crook straightened, there is another made in its place: and so there is still a crook. Want of children had long been the crook in Rachel's lot, Gen. xxx. 1. That was at length evened to her mind; but then she got another in its stead, hard labour in travailing to bring forth, chap. xxxv. 16. This world is a wilderness, in which we may indeed get our station changed: but the remove may be out of one wilderness station to another. When one part of the lot is evened, readily some other part thereof will be crooked.

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

(1.) *Disagreeableness.* A crooked thing is wayward; and being laid to a rule answers it not, but declines from it. There is not, in any body's lot, any such thing as a crook, in respect of the *will and purpose* of God. Take the most harsh and dismal dispensation in one's lot, and lay it to the eternal decree, made in the depth of infinite wisdom, before the world began, and it will answer it exactly, without the least deviation, *all things being wrought after the counsel of his will*, Eph. 1. 11. Lay it to the providential will of God, in the government of the world, and there is a perfect harmony.—If Paul is to be bound at Jerusalem, and “delivered into the hands of the “Gentiles,” it is “the will of the Lord” it should be so, Acts xxi. 11—14. Wherefore, the greatest crook of the lot, on earth, is straight in heaven: there is no disagreeableness in it there. But in every person's lot there is a crook in respect of their *mind* and natural inclination. The adverse dispensation lies cross to that rule, and will by no means answer it, nor harmonize with it. When

divine providence lays the one to the other, there is a manifest disagreeableness: the man's will goes one way, and the dispensation another way: the will bends upward, and the cross events press down: so they are contrary. And there, and only there lies the crook. It is this disagreeableness which makes the crook in the lot fit matter of trial and exercise to us, in this our state of probation: in the which, if thou wouldest approve thyself to God, walking by faith, not by sight, thou must quiet thyself, in the will and purpose of God, and not insist that it should *be according to thy mind*, Job xxxiv. 33.

(2.) *Un sightliness.* Crooked things are unpleasant to the eye: and no crook in the lot *seemeth to be joyous, but grievous*, making up an unsightly appearance, Heb. xii. 11. Therefore men need to beware of giving way to their thoughts, to dwell on the crook in their lot, and of keeping it too much in view. David shews a hurtful experience of his, in that kind, Psal. xxxix. 3. "While I was musing the fire burned." Jacob acted a wiser part, called his youngest son *Benjamin*, the son of the right-hand, whom the dying mother had named *Benoni*, the son of my sorrow; by this means providing, that the crook in his lot should not be set afresh in his view, on every occasion of mentioning the name of his son. Indeed, a christian may safely take a steady and leisurely view of the crook of his lot in the light of the holy word, which represents it as the discipline of the covenant. So faith will discover a hidden sightliness in it, under a very unsightly outward appearance; perceiving the suitableness thereof to the infinite goodness, love, and wisdom of God, and to the real and most valuable interest of the party: by which means one comes to take pleasure, and that a most refin-

ed pleasure, in distress, 2 Cor. xii. 10. But whatever the crook in the lot be to the eye of faith, it is not at all pleasant to the eye of sense.

(3.) *Unfitness for motion.* Solomon observes the cause of the uneasy and ungraceful walking of the lame. Prov. xxvi. 7. "The legs of the lame are not equal." This uneasiness they find, who are exercised about the crook in the lot: a high spirit and a low adverse lot, makes great difficulty in the Christian walk. There is nothing that gives temptation more easy access, than the crook in the lot; nothing more apt to occasion out-of-the-way steps. Therefore saith the apostle, Heb. xii. 13. "Make straight the paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way." They are to be pitied, then who are labouring under it, and not to be rigidly censured; tho' they are rare persons who learn this lesson, till taught by their own experience. It is long since Job made an observe in this case which holds good unto this day, Job xii. 5. "He that is ready to slip with his feet, is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease."

(4.) "Aptness to catch hold and entangle, like hooks, fish-hooks," Amos iv. 2. The crook in the lot doth so readily make impression, to the ruffling, and fretting one's spirit, irritating corruption, that Satan fails not to make diligent use of it to these dangerous purposes: the which point once gained by the tempter, the tempted, ere he is aware, finds himself entangled as in a thicket, out of which he knows not how to extricate himself. In that temptation it often proves like a crooked stick, troubling a standing pool, the which not only raiseth up the mud all over, but brings up from the bottom some very ugly thing. Thus it brought up a spice of Blasphemy and atheism in Asaph's

case, Psal. lxxiii. 14. "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence:" As if he had said, there is nothing at all in religion, it is a vain and empty thing that profiteth nothing; I was a fool to have been in care about purity and holiness, whether of heart or life. Ah! is this the pious Asaph! How is he turned so quite unlike himself! but the crook in the lot is the handle, whereby the tempter makes surprising discoveries of latent corruption even in the best.

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

1st. It may fall in *any part* of the lot; there is no exempted one in the case: for, sin being found in every part, the crook may take place in any part. Being "all as an unclean thing, we may all fade as a leaf," Isa. lxiv. 6. The main stream of sin, which the crook readily follows, runs in very different channels, in the case of different persons. And in regard of the various dispositions of the minds of men, that will prove a sinking weight unto one, which another would go very lightly under.

2dly, It may at once fall in *many parts* of the lot, the Lord calling, as in a solemn day, one's terrors round about, Lam. ii. 22. Sometimes God makes one notable crook in a man's lot; but its name may be Gad, being but the forerunner of a troop which cometh.—Then the crooks are multiplied, so that the party is made to halt on each side. While one stream let in from one quarter, is running full against him, another is let in on him from another quarter, till in the end the waters break in on every hand.

Sdly, It often falls in the tender part; I mean, that part of the lot wherein one is least able to bear it, or, at least thinks he is so. Psalm lv. 12, 13. "It was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it. But it was thou, a man, mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance." If there is any one part of the lot, which of all others, one is disposed to nestle in, the thorn will readily be laid there, especially if he belongs to God; in that thing wherein he is least of all able to be touched, he will be sure to be pressed. There the trial will be taken of him; for there is a grand competition with Christ. "I take from them the desires of their eyes, and that whereupon they set their minds." Ezek. xxiv. 25. Since the crook in the lot is the special trial appointed for every one, it is altogether reasonable, and becoming the wisdom of God, that it fall on that which of all things doth most rival him.

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

First, In the *natural* part, affecting persons considered as of the make allotted for them by the great God that formed all things. The parents of mankind, Adam and Eve, were formed altogether sound and entire, without the least blemish, whether in soul or body: but in the formation of their posterity, there often appears a notable variation from the original. Bodily defects, superfluities, deformities, infirmities, natural or accidental, make the crook in the lot of some: they have something unsightly or grievous about them. Crooks of this kind, more or less observable, are very common and ordinary, the best not exempted from them; and it is purely owing to sovereign pleasure they are not more numerous. Tender eyes made the crook in the lot of Leah, Gen. xxix. 17.

Rachel's beauty was balanced with bareness, the crook in her lot, chap. xxx. 1. Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles, was, it should seem, no personable man, but of a mean outward appearance, for which fools were apt to contemn him, 2 Cor. x. 10. Timothy was of a crazy frame, weakly and sickly, 1 Tim. v. 23. And there is a yet far more considerable crook in the lot of the lame, the blind, the deaf, and the dumb. Some are weak to a degree in their intellectuals; and it is the crook in the lot of several bright souls to be overcast with clouds, notably bemisted and darkened, from the crazy bodies they are lodged in; an eminent instance whereof we have in the grave, wise, and patient Job, "going mourning without the sun; yea standing up and crying in the congregation," Job xxx. 28.

Secondly, It may fall on the *honorary* part. There is an honour due to all men, the small as well as the great, 1 Pet. ii. 17. And that upon the ground of the original constitution of human nature, as it was framed in the image of God. But in the sovereign disposal of holy providence, the crook in the lot of some falls here; they are neglected and slighted; their credit is still kept low; they go through the world under a cloud, being put into an ill name, their reputation sunk. This sometimes is the native consequence of their own foolish and sinful conduct; as, in the case of Dinah, who, by gadding abroad to satisfy her youthful curiosity, regardless of, and therefore not waiting for a providential call, brought a lasting stain on her honour, Gen. xxxiv. But where the Lord intends a crook of this kind in one's lot, innocence will not be able to ward it off in an ill-natured world; neither will true merit be able to make

head against it, to make one's lot stand straight in that part. Thus David represents his case, Psal. xxxi. 11, 12, 13. "They that did see me without, fled from me: I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel. For I have heard the slander of many."

Thirdly, It may fall in the *vocational* part. Whatever is man's calling or station in the world, be it sacred or civil, the crook in their lot may take its place therein. Isaiah was an eminent prophet, but most unsuccessful, Isa. liii. 1. Jeremiah met with such a strain of discouragements and ill usage, in the exercise of his sacred function, that he was well near giving it up, saying, "I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name," Jer. xx. 9. The Psalmist observes this crook often to be made in the lot of some men very industrious in their civil business, who *sow the fields*—and at times, "God blesseth them—and suffereth not their cattle to decrease:" But again, "they are diminished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow," Psalm cvii. 37, 38, 39. Such a crook was made in Job's lot after he had long stood even. Some manage their employments with all care and diligence; the husbandman carefully labouring his ground; the sheep-master "diligent to know the state of his flocks, and looking well to his herds;" the tradesman, early and late at his business: the merchant, diligently plying his watching and falling in with the most fair and promising opportunities; but there is such a crook in that part of their lot, as all they are able to do can by no means even. For why? The most proper means used for compassing an end are insignificant, without a word of divine appointment

commanding their success. "Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?" Lam. iii. 37. People ply their business with skill and industry, but the wind turns in their face, Providence crosseth their enterprises, disconcerts their measures, frustrates their hopes and expectations, renders their endeavours unsuccessful, and so puts and keeps them still in straitning circumstances. "So the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise," Eccl. ix. 12. Providence interposing crooks and measures which human prudence and industry had laid straight towards the respective ends; so the swift lose the race, and the strong the battle, and the wise miss of bread; while, in the mean time, some one or other providential incident, supplying the defect of human wisdom, conduct, and ability, the slow gain the race, and carry the prize; the weak win the battle, and enrich themselves with the spoil; and the bread falls into the lap of the fool.

Lastly, It may fall in the *relational* part. Relations are the joints of society; and there the crook in the lot may take place, one's smartest pain being often felt in these joints. They are in their nature the springs of man's comforts; yet, they often turn the greatest bitterness to him. Sometimes this crook is occasioned by the loss of relations. Thus a crook was made in the lot of Jacob, by means of the death of Rachel, his beloved wife, and the loss of Joseph, his son and darling, which had like to have made him go halting to the grave. Job laments this crook in his lot, chap. xvi. 7. "Thou hast made desolate all my company;" meaning his dear children, every one of whom he laid in the grave, not so much as one son or daughter left him. Again, sometimes it is

made through the afflicting hand of God lying heavy on them; the which, in virtue of the relation, recoils on the party, as is feelingly expressed by that believing woman, Mat. xv. 22. "Have mercy on me, O Lord; my daughter is grievously vexed." Ephraim felt the smart of a course of afflictions, "when he called his son's name Beriah, because it went evil with his house," 1 Chron. vii. 23. Since all is not only vanity, but vexation of spirit, it can hardly miss, but the more of these springs of comfort are opened to a man, he must, at one time or other, find he has but the more sources of sorrow to gush out and spring in upon him; the sorrow always proportioned to the comfort found in them, or expected from them. And, finally, the crook is sometimes made by their proving uncomfortable through the disagreeableness of their temper, disposition, and way. There was a crook in Job's lot, by means of an undutiful, ill-natured wife, Job xix. 17. In Abigail's, by means of a surly, ill-tempered husband, 1 Sam. xxv. 25. In Eli's, through the perverseness and obstinacy of his children; chap. ii. 25. In Jonathan's, through the furious temper of his father, chap. xx. 30, 33. So do men oftentimes find their greatest cross, where they expected their greatest comfort. Sin hath unhinged the whole creation, and made every relation susceptible of the crook. In the family are found masters hard and unjust, servants froward and unfaithful; in a neighbourhood, men selfish and uneasy; in the church, ministers unedifying, and offensive in their walk, and people contemptuous and disorderly, a burden to the spirits of ministers; in the state, magistrates oppressive and discountenancers of that which is good, and subjects turbulent and

seditions; all these cause crooks in the lot of their relatives. And thus far of the crook itself.

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

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

First, It cannot be questioned, but the crook in the lot, considered as the crook, is a penal evil, whatever it is for the matter thereof; that is, whether the thing in itself, its immediate cause and occasion, be sinful or not, it is certainly a punishment or affliction. Now, as it may be, as such holily and justly brought on us, by our Sovereign Lord and Judge, so he expressly claims the doing or making of it, Amos iii. 6. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord has not done it?" Wherefore, since there can be no penal evil but of God's making, and the crook in the lot is such an evil; it is necessarily concluded to be of God's making.

Secondly, It is evident, from the scripture doctrine of divine providence, that God brings about every man's lot, and all the parts thereof. He sits at the helm of human affairs, and turns them about whithersoever he listeth. "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven and earth, in the seas and all deep places," Psal. cxxxv. 6. There is not any thing whatsoever befalls us, without his over-ruling hand. The same providence that brought us out of the womb, bringeth us to, and fixeth us in the condition and place allotted for us, by him who "hath determined the times and the bounds of our habitation," Acts xvii. 26. It

over-rules the smallest and most casual things about us, such as "hairs of our head falling on the ground," Mat. x. 29, 30. "A lot cast into a lap," Prov. xvi. 33. Yea, the free acts of our will, whereby we chuse for ourselves, for even "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water," Prov. xxi. 1. And the whole steps we make, and which others make in reference to us; for "the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," Jer. x. 23. And this, whether these steps, causing the crook, be deliberate and sinful ones, such as Joseph's brethren selling him into Egypt; or whether they are undesigned, such as man-slaughter purely casual, as when one hewing wood, kills his neighbour with "the head of the ax slipping from the helve," Deut. xix. 5. For there is a holy and wise providence that goveras the sinful and the heedless actions of men, as a rider doth a lame horse, of whose halting, not he but the horse's own lameness, is the true and proper cause; wherefore, in the former of these cases, God is said to have sent Joseph into Egypt, Gen. xiv. 7. and in the latter, to deliver one into his neighbour's hand, Exod. xxi. 13.

Lastly, God hath, by an eternal decree, immovable as *mountains of brass*, Zech. vi. 1. appointed the whole of every one's lot, the crooked parts thereof, as well as the straight. By the same eternal decree, whereby the high and low parts of the earth, the mountains and the vallies, were appointed, are the heights and depths, the prosperity and adversity, in the lot of the inhabitants thereof determined; and they are brought about, in time, in perfect agreeableness thereto.

The mystery of providence, in the government of the world, is, in all the parts thereof, the build-

ing reared up of God, in exact conformity to the plan in his decree, "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," Eph. i. 11. So that there is never a crook in one's lot, but may be run up to this original. Hereof Job piously sets us an example in his own case, Job xxiii. 13, 14. "He is in one mind, and who can turn him? And what his soul desireth, even that he doth." For "he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him."

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

First, There are *pure* and *sinless* crooks; the which are mere afflictions, cleanly crosses, grievous indeed, but not defiling. Such were Lazarus's, Rachel's barrenness, Leah's tender eyes, the blindness of the man who had been from his birth, John ix. 1. Now, the crooks of this kind are of God's making, by the efficacy of his power directly bringing them to pass, and causing them to be. He is the Maker of the poor, Prov. xvii. 5. "Whoso mocketh the poor, reproacheth his Maker," that is, reproacheth God who made him poor, according to that, 1 Sam. ii. 7. "The Lord maketh poor." It is he that hath the key of the womb, and as he sees meet, shuts it, 1 Sam. i. 5. or opens it; Gen. xxix. 31. And it is "he that formed the eye," Psalm xciv. 9. And the man was "born blind, that the works of God should be made manifest in him," John ix. 3. Therefore he saith to Moses, Exod. ix. 11. "Who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord?" Such crooks in the lot are of God's making, in the most ample sense, and in their full comprehension, being the direct ef-

fects of his agency, as well as the heavens and the earth are.

Secondly, There are *impure sinful crooks*, which, in their own nature, are sins as well as afflictions, defiling as well as grievous. Such was the crook made in David's lot, through his family disorders, the defiling of Tamar, the murder of Amnon, the rebellion of Absalom, all of them unnatural. Of the same kind was that made in Job's lot by the Sabeans and Chaldeans, taking away his substance and slaying his servants. As these were the afflictions of David and Job respectively, so they were the sins of the actors, the unhappy instruments thereof. Thus one and the same thing may be, to one a heinous sin, defiling and laying him under guilt, and to another an affliction, laying him under suffering only. Now, the crooks of this kind are not of God's making, in the same latitude as those of the former: For he neither puts evil in the heart of any, nor stirreth up to it: "He cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man," James i. 13. But they are of his making, by his holy permission of them, powerful bounding of them, and wise over ruling of them to some good end.

1st, He holily *permits* them, suffering men "to walk in their own ways," Acts xiv. 16. Though he is not the author of these sinful crooks, causing them to be, by the efficacy of his power: yet if he did not permit them, willing not to hinder them, they could not be at all; for "he shutteth and no man openeth," Rev. iii. 7. But he justly withhold his grace, which the sinner doth not desire, takes off the restraint under which he is uneasy, and since the sinner will be gone, lays the reins on his neck, and leaves him to the swing of his lust. Hos. iv. 17. "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him

alone." Psal. lxxxii. 11, 12. "Israel would none of me: So I gave them up to their own hearts' lust." In which unhappy situation, the sinful crook doth, from the sinner's own proper motion, natively and infallibly follow; even as water runs down a hill, wherever there is a gap left open before it. So in these circumstances, "Israel walked in their own counsels," ver. 12. And thus this kind of crook is of God's making, as a just Judge, punishing the sufferer by it. The which view of the matter silenced David under Shebani's cursings, 2 Sam. xvi. 10. "Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him."

2dly, He powerfully bounds them, Psal. lxxvii. 10. "The remainder of wrath," (namely, the creature's wrath) "thou shalt restrain." Did not God bound these crooks, howsoever sore they are in any one's case, they would be yet sorer: But he says to the sinful instrument, as he said to the sea, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." He lays a restraining band on him, that he cannot go one step farther, in the way his impetuous lust drives, than he sees meet to permit. Hence it comes to pass, that the crook of this kind is neither more nor less, but just as great as he by his powerful bounding makes it to be. An eminent instance hereof we have in the case of Job, whose lot was crooked through a peculiar agency of the devil; but even to that grand sinner, God set a bound in the case; "The Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power, only upon himself put not forth thine hand," Job i. 12. Now Satan went the full length of the bound, leaving nothing within the compass thereof untouched, which he saw could make for his purpose, ver. 13, 19. But he could by no means move one step beyond

it, to carry his point, which he could not gain within it. And therefore, to make the trial greater, and the crook sorer, nothing remained but that the bound set should be removed, and the sphere of his agency enlarged; for which cause he saith, "But touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face," chap. ii. 5. and it being removed accordingly, but withal a new one set, ver. 6. "Behold he is in thine hand, but save his life;" the crook was carried to the utmost that the new bound would permit, in a consistency with his design of bringing Job to blaspheme; "Satan smote him with sore-boils, from the sole of his foot, unto the crown of his head," ver. 7. And had it not been for this bond, securing Job's life, he, after finding this attempt successful too, had doubtless dispatched him for good and all.

3dly, He wisely *over-rules* them to some good purpose, becoming the divine perfections. While the sinful instrument hath an ill design in the crook caused by him, God directs it to a holy and good end. In the disorders of David's family, Amnon's design was to gratify a brutish lust; Absalom's, to glut himself with revenge, and to satisfy his pride and ambition; but God meant thereby to punish David for his sin in the matter of Uriah. In the crook made in Job's lot, by Satan, and the Sabeans and Chaldeans, his instruments, Satan's design was to cause Job blaspheme, and their's to gratify their covetousness: but God had another design therein becoming himself, namely to manifest Job's sincerity and uprightness. Did not he wisely powerfully *over-rule* these crooks made in men's lot, no good could come out of them; but he always *over-rules* them so as to fulfil his own holy purposes thereby, howbeit the sinner meaneth not so; for his designs cannot miscarry, his "coun-

“sel shall stand,” Isa. xlv. 10. So the sinful crook is, the over-ruling hand of God, turned about to his own glory, and his people’s good in the end; according to the word, Prov. xvi. 4. “The Lord hath made all things for himself.” Rom. viii. 28. “All things work together for good to them that love God.” Thus Haman’s plot for the destruction of the Jews “was turned to the contrary,” Esth. ix. 1. And the crook made in Joseph’s lot, by his own brethren selling him into Egypt, though it was on their part most sinful, and of a most mischievous design; yet as it was of God’s making, by his holy permission, powerful bounding, and wise over-ruling of it, had an issue well becoming the divine wisdom and goodness: both of which Joseph noticeth to them, Gen. l. 20. “As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it into good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.”

THIRDLY, It remains to enquire, *Why God* makes a crook in one’s lot? And this is to be cleared by discovering the *design* of that dispensation; a matter which it concerns every one to know, and carefully to notice, in order to a Christian improvement of the crook in their lot. The design thereof seems to be chiefly seven-fold.

First, The *trial* of one’s *state*. Whether one is in the state of grace, or not? Whether a sincere Christian, or a hypocrite? Though every affliction is trying, yet here I conceive lies the main providential trial a man was brought upon, with reference to his state, forasmuch as the crook in the lot, being a matter of a continued course, one has occasion to open and shew himself again in the same thing; whence it comes to pass, that it ministers ground for a decision, in that momentous point. It was plainly on this bottom that the trial

of Job's state was put. The question was, whether Job was an upright and sincere servant of God, as God himself testified of him; or but a mercenary one, a hypocrite, as Satan alledged against him? And the trial hereof was put upon the crook to be made in his lot, Job i. 8—12, and ii. 3—6. Accordingly, that which all his friends, save Elihu the last speaker, did, in their reasoning with him under his trial aim at, was to prove him a hypocrite; Satan thus making use of these good men for gaining his point. As God took a trial of Israel in the wilderness, for the land of Canaan, by a train of afflicting dispensations, the which Caleb and Joshua bearing strenuously, were declared meet to enter the promised land, as having *followed the Lord fully*; while others being tired out with them, their carcasses fell in the wilderness; so he makes trial of men for heaven, by the crook in their lot. If one can stand that test, he is manifested to be a saint, a sincere servant of God, as Job was proven to be; if not, he is but a hypocrite: he cannot stand the test of the crook in his lot, but goes away like dross in God's furnace. A melancholy instance of which we have in that man of honour and wealth, who, with high pretences of religion, arising from a principle of moral seriousness, addressed himself to our Saviour, to know "what he should do that he might inherit eternal life," Mark x. 17, 21. Our Saviour, to discover the man to himself, makes a crook in his lot, where all along before it had stood even, obliging him, by a probatory command, to sell and give away all that he had, and follow him, ver. 21. "Sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and come take up the cross and follow me." Hereby he was, that moment, in the court of conscience, stript of his great pos-

sessions; so that thenceforth he could no longer keep them, with a good conscience, as he might have done before, The man instantly felt the smart of this crook made in his lot; "he was sad" at that saying," ver. 22. that is, immediately upon the hearing of it, being struck with pain, disorder, and confusion of mind, his countenance changed, became cloudy and lowering, as the same word is used, Mat. xvi. 3. He could not stand the test of that crook; he could by no means submit his lot to God in that point, but behaved to have it, at any rate, according to his own mind. So he "went away grieved, for he had great possessions." He went away from Christ back to his plentiful estate, and though with a pained and sorrowful heart, sat him down again on it a violent possessor before the Lord, thwarting the divine order. And there is no appearance that ever this order was revoked, nor that ever he came to a better temper in reference thereunto.

Secondly, Excitation to duty, weaning one from this world, and prompting him to look after the happiness of the other world. Many have been beholden to the crook in their lot, for that ever they came to themselves, settled and turned serious. Going for a time like a wild ass used to the wilderness, scorning to be turned, their foot hath slid in due time; and a crook being hereby made in their lot, their month hath come wherein they have been caught, Jer. ii. 24. Thus was the prodigal brought to himself, and obliged to entertain thoughts of returning unto his father, Luke xv. 17. The crook in their lot convinces them at length that here is not their rest. Finding still a pricking thorn of uneasiness, whensoever they lay down their head

where they would faintest take rest in the creature, and that they were obliged to lift it again, they are brought to conclude, there is no hope from that quarter, and begin to cast about for rest another way, so it makes them errands to God, which they had not before; forasmuch as they feel a need of the comforts of the other world, to which their moutns were out of taste, while their lot stood even to their mind. Wherefore, whatever use we make of the crook in our lot, the voice of it is, *Arise ye and depart, this is not your rest.* And it is surely that, which of all means of mortification, of the afflictive kind, doth most deaden a real Christian to this life and world.

Thirdly, Conviction of sin. As when one walking heedlessly is suddenly taken ill of a lameness; his going halting the rest of his way convinceth him of having made a wrong step; and every new painful step brings it afresh to his mind: so God makes a crook in one's lot, to convince him of some false step he hath made, or course he hath taken. What the sinner would otherwise be apt to overlook, forget, or think light of, is by this means recalled to mind, set before him as an evil and bitter thing, and kept in remembrance, that his heart may every now and then bleed for it afresh. Thus, by the crook men's sin finds them out to their conviction, "as the thief is ashamed when he is found," Num. xxxii. 23. Jer. ii. 26. The which Joseph's brethren do feelingly express, under the crook made in their lot in Egypt, Gen. xlii. 21. "We are verily guilty concerning our brother," chap. xliv. 16. "God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants." The crook in the lot doth usually, in its nature or circumstances, so natively refer to the false step or course, that it serves for a provi-

dential memorial of it, bringing the sin, though of an old date, fresh to remembrance, and for a badge of the sinner's folly in word or deed, to keep it ever before him. When Jacob found Leah, through Laban's unfair dealing, palmed upon him for Rachel, how could he miss of a stinging remembrance of the cheat he had seven years, at least, before, put on his own father, pretending himself to be Esau? Gen. xxvii. 19. How could it miss of galling him occasionally afterwards during the course of the marriage? He had imposed on his father the younger brother for the elder; and Laban imposed on him the elder sister for the younger. The dimness of Isaac's eyes favoured the former cheat; and the darkness of the evening did as much favour the latter. So he behoved to say, as Adonibezek in another case, Judg. i. 7. "As I have done, so God hath requited me." In like manner, Rachel dying in child-birth, could hardly evade a melancholy reflection on her rash and passionate expression, mentioned, Gen. xxx. 1. "Give me children, or else I die." Even holy Job read in the crook of his lot, some false steps he had made in his youth many years before, Job xiii. 26. "Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth."

Fourthly, Correction, or punishment for sin: In nothing more than in the crook of the lot, in that word verified, Jer. ii. 19. "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee." God may, for a time, wink at one's sin, which afterward he'll set a brand of his indignation upon in crooking the sinner's lot, as he did in the case of Jacob, and of Rachel, mentioned before. Though the sin was a passing action, or a course of no long continuance, the mark

of the divine displeasure for it, set on the sinner in the crook of his lot, may pain him long and sore, that by repeated experience he may know what an evil and bitter thing it was. David's killing Uriah by the sword of the Ammonites was soon over; but for that cause "the sword never departed from his house," 2 Sam. xii. 10. Gehazi quickly obtained two bags of money from Naaman, in the way of falsehood and lying; but as a lasting mark of the divine indignation against the profane trick, he got withal a leprosy which clave to him while he lived, and to his posterity after him, 2 Kings v. 27. This may be the case, as well where the sin is pardoned, as to the guilt of eternal wrath, as where it is not. And one may have confessed and sincerely repented of that sin, which yet shall make him go halting to the grave, though it cannot carry him to hell. A man's person may be accepted in the Beloved, who yet hath a particular badge of the divine displeasure, with his sin hung upon him in the crook of his lot, Psalm xcix. 8. "Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance on their inventions."

Fifthly, Preventing of sin, Hos. ii. 6. "I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall that she shall not find her paths." The crook in the lot will readily be found to lie cross to some wrong bias of the heart, which peculiarly sways with the party: so it is like a thorn-hedge or stone wall in the way which that bias inclines him to. The defiling objects in the world do specially take and prove ensnaring, as they are suited to the particular cast of temper in men: but by means of the crook in the lot, the paint and varnish is worn off the defiling object, whereby it loseth its former ta-

king appearance: so the fuel being removed, the edge of corrupt affections is blunted, temptation weakened, and much sin prevented; the sinner, after "gadding about so much to change his way, returning ashamed," Jer. ii. 36, 37. Thus the Lord crooks one's lot that "he may withdraw man from his purpose; and hide pride from men:" And so, "he keepeth back his soul from the pit," Job xxxiii. 17, 18. Every one knows what is most pleasant to him; but God alone knows what is the most profitable. As all men are liars, so all men are fools too: He is the *only wise God*, Jude, ver. 25. Many are obliged to the crook in their lot, that they go not to those excesses, which their vain minds and corrupt affections would with full sail carry them to; and they would from their hearts bless God for making it, if they did but calmly consider what would most likely be the issue of the removal thereof. When one is in hazard of fretting under the hardship of bearing the crook, he would do well to consider what condition he is as yet in, for to bear its removal in a Christian manner.

Sixthly, Discovery of the latent corruption, whether in saints or sinners. There are some corruptions in every man's heart, which lie, as it were, so near the surface, that they are ready on every turn to cast up; but then there are others also which lie so very deep, that they are scarcely observed at all. But as the fire under the pot makes the scum to cast up, appear a-top, and run over; so the crook in the lot raiseth up from the bottom, and brings out such corruption as otherways one would hardly imagine to be within. Who would have suspected such strength of passion in the meek

Moses as he discovered at the waters of strife, and for which he was kept out of Canaan, Psalm cvi. 32, 33. Numb. xx. 13? So much bitterness of spirit in the patient Job, as to charge God with becoming cruel to him, Job xxx. 21? So much ill-nature in the good Jeremiah, as to curse not only the day of his birth, but even the man who brought tidings of it to his father, Jer. xx. 14, 15? Or, such a twang of atheism in Asaph, as to pronounce religion a vain thing, Psalm lxxiii. 13? But the crook in the lot, bringing out these things, shewed them to have been within, how long soever they had lurked unobserved. And as this design, however indecently proud scoffers allow themselves to treat it, is in no ways inconsistent with the divine perfections; so the discovery itself is necessary for the due humiliation of sinners, and to stain the pride of all glory, that men may know themselves. Both which appear, in that it was on this very design that God made the long-continued crook in Israel's lot in the wilderness; even to humble them and prove them, to know what was in their heart, Deut. viii. 2.

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

occasions for them. The truth is, the crook in the lot is the great engine of Providence for making men appear in their true colours, discovering both their ill and their good; and if the grace of God be in them, it will bring it out, and cause it to display itself. It so puts the Christian to his shifts, that however it makes him stagger for a while, yet it will at length evidence both the reality and the strength of grace in him. "Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, may be found unto praise," 1 Pet. i. 6, 7. The crook in the lot gives rise to many acts of faith, hope, love, self-denial, resignation, and other graces; to many heavenly breathings, pantings, and groanings, which otherways would not be brought forth. And I make no question but these things, howsoever by carnal men despised as trifling, are more precious in the sight of God than even believers themselves are aware of, being acts of immediate internal worship; and will have a surprising notice taken of them, and of the sum of them, at long-run, howbeit the persons themselves often can hardly think them worth their own notice at all. We know who hath said to the gracious soul, "Let me see thy countenance; thy countenance is comely," Song ii. 24. "Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes," chap. iv. 9. The steady acting of a gallant army of horse and foot to the routing of the enemy, is highly prized; but the acting of holy fear and humble hope, is in reality far more valuable, as being so in the sight of God, whose judgment, we are sure, is according to truth. This the Psalmist teacheth, Psalm cxlvii. 11, 12. "He delighteth not in the strength of the horse; he taketh not

“pleasure in the legs of a man. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.” And indeed the exercise of the graces of his spirit in his people, is so very precious in his sight, that whatever grace any of them do excel in, they will readily get such a crook made in their lot, as will be a special trial for it, that will make a proof of its full strength. Abraham excelled in the grace of faith, in trusting God’s bare word of promise, over the belly of sense: And God giving him a promise, that *he would make of him a great nation*, made withal a crook in his lot, by which he had enough ado with all the strength of his faith; while he was obliged for good and all to leave his country and kindred, and sojourn among the Canaanites; his wife continuing barren, till past the age of child-bearing; and when she had at length brought forth Isaac, and he was grown up, he was called to offer him up for a burnt-offering, the more exquisite trial of his faith, that Ishmael was now expelled his family, and that it was declared, That *in Isaac only his seed should be called*, Gen. xxi. 12. “Moses was very meek above all the men which were upon the face of the earth,” Numb. xii. 3. And he was intrusted with the conduct of a most perverse and unmanageable people, the crook in his lot plainly designed for the exercise of his meekness. Job excelled in patience, and by the crook in his lot, he got as much to do with it. For God gives none of his people to excel in a gift, but some one time or other he will afford them use for the whole compass of it.

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

Use 1. Of reproof. And it meets with three sorts of persons as reprobable.

First, The *carnal* and *earthly*, who do not with awe and reverence regard the crook in their lot as of God's making. There is certainly a signature of the divine hand upon it to be perceived by just observers; and that challengeth an awful regard, the neglect of which forbodes destruction, Psal. xxviii. 5. "Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, thou shalt destroy them, and not build them up." And herein they are deeply guilty, who poring upon second causes, and looking no farther than the unhappy instruments of the crook in their lot, overlooking the first cause, as a dog snarles at the stone, but looks not to the hand that casts it. This is, in effect, to make a God of the creature; so regarding it, as if it could of itself effectuate any thing, while, in the mean time, it is but an instrument in the hand of God, "the rod of his anger," Isa. x. 5. "Ordained of him for judgment, established for correction," Hab. i. 12. O! why should men terminate their view on the instruments of the crook in their lot, and so magnify their scourges! The truth is, they are, for the most part, rather to be pitied, as having an undesirable office, which, for their gratifying their sensuality, set themselves to despise the crook in their lot, to making nothing of it, and to their own corrupt affections, in making the crook in the lot of others, returns on their own head at length with a vengeance, as did "the blood of Jezreel on the house of Jehu," Hos. i. 4. And it is specially undesirable to be so employed in the case of such as belong to God; for rarely is the ground of the quarrel the same on the part of the instrument as on God's part, but very different; witness Shi-

mei's cursing David, as a bloody man, meaning the blood of the house of Saul, which he was not guilty of, while God meant it of the blood of Uriah, which he could not deny, 2 Sam. xvi. 7, 8. Moreover, the quarrel will be, at long-run, taken up between God and his people; and then their scourgers will find they had but a thankless office, Zech. i. 15. "I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction," saith God, in resentment of the heathen crooking the lot of his people. In like manner are they guilty, who impute the crook in their lot to fortune, or their ill-luck, which in very deed is nothing but a creature of imagination, framed for a blind to keep men from acknowledging the hand of God. Thus, what the Philistines doubt, they do more impiously determine, saying, in effect, "It is not his hand that smote us, it was a chance that happened us," 1 Sam. vi. 9. And, finally, those also, who, in the way of giving up themselves to carnal mirth and sensuality, set themselves to despise the crook in their lot, to make nothing of it, and to forget it. I question not, but one committing his case to the Lord, and looking to him for remedy in the first place, may lawfully call in the moderate use of the comforts of life, for help in the second place. But as for that course so frequent and usual in this case among carnal men, if the crook of the lot really be, as indeed it is, of God's making, it must needs be a most indecent unbecoming course, to be abhorred of all good men, Prov. iii. 11. "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord." It is surely a very desperate method of cure, which cannot miss of issuing in something worse than the disease, however it may palliate it for a while, Isa. xxii. 12, 14. "In that day did the Lord God of hosts

“ call to weeping and mourning, and behold joy and
“ gladness, eating flesh and drinking wine : And it
“ was revealed in mine ears, by the Lord of hosts,
“ Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you
“ till ye die.”

Secondly, The *unsubmissive*, whose hearts, like the troubled sea, swell and boil, fret and murmur, and cannot be at rest under the crook in their lot. This is a most sinful and dangerous course. The apostle Jude, characterising some, “ to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever,” ver. 1. saith of them, ver. 16. “ These are murmurers, “ complainers,” namely, still complaining of their lot, which is the import of the word there used by the Holy Ghost. For, since the crook in their lot, which their unsubdued spirits can by no means submit to, is of God’s making, this their practice must needs be a fighting against God : and these their complainings and murmurings are indeed against him, whatever face they put upon them. Thus when the Israelites murmured against Moses, Numb. xiv. 2. God charges them with murmuring against himself : “ How long shall I bear with this “ evil congregation, which murmured against me ?” ver. 27. Ah ! may not he who made and fashioned us without our advice, be allowed to make our lot too, without asking our mind, but we must rise up against him on account of the crook made in it ? What doth this speak, but that the proud creature cannot endure God’s work, nor digest what he hath done ? And how black and dangerous is that temper of spirit ? How is it possible to miss of being broken to pieces in such a course ? “ He is wise in “ heart, and mighty in strength : Who hath harden- “ ed himself against him, and hath prospered ?” Job. ix. 4.

Lastly, The *careless* and *unfruitful*, who do not set themselves dutifully to comply with the design of the crook in their lot. God and nature do nothing in vain. Since he makes the crook, there is, doubtless, a becoming design in it, which we are obliged in duty to fall in with, according to that, Micah vi. 9. "Hear ye the rod." And, indeed, if one shut not his own eyes, but be willing to understand, he may easily perceive the general design thereof to be, to wean him from this world, and move him to seek and take up his heart's rest in God. And the nature, and the circumstances of the crook itself being duly considered, it will not be very hard to make a more particular discovery of the design thereof. But, alas! the careless sinner, sunk in spiritual sloth and stupidity, is in no concern to discover the design of Providence in the crook; so he cannot fall in with it, but remains unfruitful; and all the pains taken on him, by the great Husbandman, in the dispensation, are lost. "They cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty;" groaning under the pressure of the crook itself, and weight of the hand of the instrument thereof: "But none saith, Where is God my maker?" they look not, they turn not unto God for all that, Job. xxxv. 9. 10.

Use 2. Of consolation. It speaks comfort to the afflicted children of God. Whatever is the crook in your lot, it is of God's making; and therefore you may look upon it kindly. Since it is your Father has made it for you, question not but there is a favourable design in it towards you. A discreet child welcometh his father's rod, knowing that being a father, he seeks his benefit thereby; and shall not God's children welcome the crook in their lot, as designed by their Father, who cannot mistake

his measures to work for their good, according to the promise? The truth is, the crook in the lot of a believer, how painful soever it proves, is a part of the discipline of the covenant, the nurture secured by the promise of the Father to Christ's children, Psalm lxxxix. 30, 32. "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments, then will I visit their transgressions with the rod." Furthermore, all who are disposed to betake themselves to God under the crook in their lot, may take comfort in this, let them know that there is no crook in their lot but may be made straight; for God made it, surely then he can mend it. He himself can make straight what he hath made crooked, though none other can. There is nothing too hard for him to do: "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that he may set him with princes. He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children," Psalm cxiii. 7—9. Say not that your crook hath been of so long continuance, that it will never mend. Put it in the hand of God, who made it, that he may mend it, and wait on him: and if it be for thy good, that it should be mended, it shall be mended; for, "no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly," Psal. lxxxiv. 11.

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

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

Ans. From what hath been already said, it appears, that although the crook in thy lot be indeed immediately from the creature's hand, yet it is mediately from the hand of God; there being nothing of that kind, no penal evil, but *the Lord hath done it.* Therefore, without all peradventure, God himself is thy principal party, whoever be the less principal. And albeit thou hast not deserved thy crook at the hand of the instrument or instruments which he makes use of for thy correction, thou certainly deservest it at his hand; and he may make use of what instrument he will in the matter, or may do it immediately by himself, even as seems good in his sight.

Object. 2. But the crook in my lot might quickly be evened, if the instrument or instruments thereof pleased; only there is no dealing with them, so as to convince them of their fault in making it.

Ans. If it is so, be sure God's time is not as yet come, that that crook should be evened; for, if it were come, though they stand now like an impregnable fort, they would give way like a sandy bank under one's feet: they should "bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet," Isa. xlix. 23. Meanwhile, that state of the matter is so far from justifying one's not eyeing the hand of God in the crook in the lot, that it makes a piece of trial in which his hand very eminently appears, namely, that men should be signally injurious and burdensome to others, yet by no means susceptible of

conviction. This was the trial of the church from her adversaries, Jer. l. 7. "All that found them have devoured them; and their adversaries said, We offend not, because they have sinned against the Lord, the habitation of justice." They were very abusive, and gave her barbarous usage; yet would they take with no fault in the matter. How could they ward off the conviction? Were they verily blameless in devouring the Lord's straying sheep? No, surely; they were not. Did they look upon themselves as ministers of the divine justice against her? No: they did not.

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

Wherefore, laying aside these frivolous pretences, and eyeing the hand of God, as that which hath bowed your lot in that part, and keeps it in the bow, be reconciled to, and submit under the crook, whatever it is, saying from the heart,

“Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it,” Jer. x. 19. And to move you hereunto, consider,

1. It is a duty you owe to God, as your sovereign Lord and Benefactor. His sovereignty challengeth our submission; and it can in no case be meanness of spirit to submit unto the crook which his hand hath made in our lot, and to go quietly under the yoke that he hath laid on; but it is really madness for the potsherds of the earth, by their turbulent and refractory carriage under it, to strive with their Maker. And his beneficence to us, ill-deserving creatures, may well stop our mouths from our complaining of his making a crook in our lot, who had done us no wrong had he made the whole of it crooked: “Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” Job ii. 10.

2. It is an unalterable statute, for the time of this life, that no body shall *want* a crook in their lot; for “man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward,” Job v. 7. And those who are designed for heaven, are in a special manner assured of a crook in their’s, that “in the world they shall have tribulation,” John xvi. 33; for by means thereof the Lord makes them meet for heaven. And how can you imagine that you shall be exempted from the common lot of mankind? Shall “the rock be removed out of his place for thee?” And since God makes the crooks in men’s lot, according to the different exigence of their cases, you may be sure that your’s is necessary for you.

3. A crook in the lot, which one can by no means submit to, makes a condition of all things the likest to that in *hell*. For there a yoke, which the wretched sufferers can neither bare nor shake off, is wreathed about their necks; there the al-

mighty arm draws against them, and they against it; there they are ever suffering and ever sinning; still in the furnace, but their dross not consumed, nor they purified. Even such is the case of those who now cannot submit under the crook in their lot.

4. Great is the *loss* by not submitting under it. The crook in the lot, rightly improv'd, hath turn'd to the best account, and made the best time to some that ever they had all their life long, as the Psalmist from his own experience testifies, Psalm cxix. 67. "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." There are many now in heaven, who are blessing God for the crook they had in their lot here. What a sad thing must it then be to lose this teeth-wind for Immanuel's land? But if the crook in thy lot do thee no good, be sure it will not miss of doing thee great damage; it will hugely increase guilt, and aggravate thy condemnation, while it shall for ever cut to the heart, to think of the pains taken on thee, by means of the crook in the lot, to wean thee from the world, and bring thee to God, but all in vain. Take heed, therefore, how you manage it, "Lest—thou mourn at the last—and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof?" Prov. v. 10, 11, 12.

DOCT. II. *What God sees meet to mar, we will not be able to mend in our lot. What crook God makes in our lot, we will not be able to even.—We shall,*

I. Shew God's marring and making a crook in one's lot, as he sees meet.

II. We shall consider men's attempting to mend or even that crook in their lot.

III. In what sense it is to be understood, that we will not be able to mend, or even the crook in our lot.

IV. Render some reasons of the point.

I. As to the first head, namely, Shew God's *marring* and *making* a crook in one's lot, as he sees meet.

First God keeps the *choice* of every one's crook to himself; and therein he exerts his sovereignty, Matt. xx. 15. It is not left to our option what that crook shall be, or what our peculiar burden; but as the potter makes of the same clay one vessel for one use, another for another use; so God makes one crook for one, another for another, according to his own will and pleasure, Psalm cxxxv. 6. "Whatsoever the Lord pleaseth, that did he, in heaven and in earth," &c.

Secondly, He sees and observes the *bias* of every one's will and inclination how it lies, and wherein it especially bends away from himself, and consequently wherein it needs the special bow; so he did in that man's case, Mark x. 21. "One thing thou lackest; go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give it to the poor," &c. Observe the bent of his heart to his great possessions. He takes notice what is that idol that in every one's case is most apt to be his rival, that so he may suit the trial to the case, making the crook there.

Thirdly, By the conduct of his providence, or a touch of his hand, he gives that part of one's lot a *bow* the contrary way; so that henceforth it lies quite contrary to that bias of the party's will, Ezek. xxiv. 25. And here the trial is made, the bent of

the will lying one way, and that part of one's lot another, that it does not answer the inclination of the party, but thwarts with it.

Lastly, He wills that crook in the lot to remain while he sees meet, for longer or shorter time, just according to his own holy ends he designs it for, 2 Sam. xii. 10. Hos. v. 15. By that will it is so fixed, that the whole creation cannot alter it, or put it out of the bow.

II. We shall consider men's attempting to mend or even that crook in their lot. This, in a word, lies in their making efforts to bring their lot in that point to their own will, that they may both go one way; so it imports three things:

First, A certain *uneasiness* under the crook in the lot; it is a yoke which is hard for the party to bear, till his spirit be tamed and subdued, Jer. xxxi. 18. "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: Turn thou me, and I shall be turned," &c. And it is for the breaking down of the weight of one's spirit that God lays it on; for which cause it is declared to be a good thing to bear it, Lam. iii. 27. that being the way to make one at length as a weaned child.

Secondly, A strong *desire* to have the cross removed, and to have matters in that part going according to our inclinations. This is very natural, nature desiring to be freed from every thing that is burdensome or cross to it; and if that desire be kept in a due subordination to the will of God, and be not too peremptory, it is not sinful, Matt. xxvi. 39. "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will," &c. Hence so many accepted prayers of the people of God, for the removal of the crook in their lot.

Lastly, An earnest use of *means* for that end. This natively follows on that desire. The man, being pressed with the cross, which is in his crook, labours all he can in the use of means to be rid of it. And if the means used be lawful, and not relied upon, but followed with an eye to God in them, the attempt is not sinful either, whether he succeed in the use of them or not.

III. In what *sense* it is to be understood, that we will not be able to mend, or even the crook in our lot.

Negatively, It is not to be understood, as if the case were absolutely *hopeless*, and that there is no remedy for the crook in the lot. For there is no case so desperate but God may right it, Gen. xviii. 14. "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" When the crook has continued long, and spurned all remedies one has used for it, one is ready to lose hope about it; but many a crook, given over for hopeless that would never mend, God has made perfectly straight, as in Job's case.

But, *Positively*, We will never be able to mend it by *curseelves*; if the Lord himself take it not in hand to remove it, it will stand before us immoveable, like a mountain of brass, though perhaps it may be in itself a thing that might easily be removed. We take it up in these three things:

1. It will never do by the mere *force* of our hand, 1 Sam. ii. 9.—"For, by strength shall no man prevail.—" The most vigorous endeavours we can use will not even the crook, if God give it not a touch of his hand; so that all endeavours that way, without an eye to God, are vain and fruitless, and will be but plowing on the rock, Psalm cxxvii. 1, 2.

2. The use of all allowable means, for it will be *successless* unless the Lord bless them for that end, Lam. iii. 37. "Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it "not?" As one may eat, and not be satisfied, so one may use means proper for evening the crook in the lot, and yet prevail nothing; for nothing can be or do for us any more than God makes it to be or do, Eccl. ix. 11. "The race is not to the "swift, nor the battle to the strong; neither yet "bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of un-
"derstanding," &c.

3. It will never do in *our time*, but in God's time, which seldom is so early as ours, John vii. 6,—“ My time is not yet come, but your time is “always ready,” Hence that crook remains sometimes immoveable, as if it were kept by an invisible hand; and at another time it goes away with a touch, because God's time is come for evening it.

IV. We shall now assign the *reasons* of the point.

1st, Because of the absolute *dependence* we have upon God, Acts xvii. 28. As the light depends on the sun, or the shadow on the body, so we depend on God, and without him can do nothing great or small. And God will have us to find it so, to teach us our dependence.

2dly, Because his will is *irresistible*, Isa. xlvi. 10. “ My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my “pleasure.” When God wills one thing, and the creature the contrary, it is easy to see which will must be done.—When the omnipotent arm holds, in vain does the creature draw, Job ix. 4—“ Who “hath hardened himself against him and prospered?”

Inference 1. There is a *necessity* of yielding and submitting under the crook in our lot; for we may as well think to remove the rocks and mountains, which God has settled, as to make that part of our lot straight which he hath made crooked.

2. The evening the crook in our lot, by main force of our own, is but a *cheat* we put on ourselves, and will not last, but like a stick by main force made straight, it will quickly return to the bow again.

3. The only habile way of getting the crook evened is to *apply* to God for it.

Exhortation 1. Let us then apply to *God* for removing any crook in our lot, that in the settled order of things may be removed. Men cannot cease to desire the removal of the crook, more than that of a thorn in the flesh; but, since we are not able to mend what God sees meet to mar, it is evident we are to apply to him that made it to mend it, and not take the evening of it in our own hand.

Motive 1. All our attempts for its removal will, without him, be *vain* and *fruitless*, Psalm cxxvii.

1. Let us be as resolute as we will to have it evened, if God say it not, we will labour in vain, Lam. iii. 37. Howsoever fair the means we use bid for it, they will be ineffectual if he command not the blessing, Eccl. ix. 11.

2. Such attempts will readily make it *worse*. Nothing is more ordinary, than for a proud spirit striving with the crook, to make it more crooked, Eccl. x. 8. "Whoso breaketh a hedge, a serpent shall bite him."—ver. 9. "Whoso removeth stones shall be hurt therewith," &c. This is evident in the case of the murmurers in the wilderness. It natively comes to be so; because, at that rate, the will of the party bends farther away from

it, and moreover God is provoked to wreathe the yoke the faster about one's neck, that he will by no means let it sit easy on him.

3. There is no crook but what may be *remedied* by him, and made perfectly straight, Psal. cxlvi. 8. "The Lord raiseth them that are bowed down," &c. He can raise the oldest sit-fast, concerning which there remains no hope with us, Rom. iv. 17. "Who quickened the dead, and calleth those things "which be not, as though they were." It is his prerogative to do wonders; to begin a work, where the whole creation gives it over as hopeless, and carry it on to perfection, Gen. xviii. 14.

4. He *loves* to be employed in evening crooks, and calls us to employ him that way, Psal. l. 15. "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will "deliver thee," &c. He makes them for that very end, that he may bring us to him on that errand, and may manifest his power and goodness in evening of them, Hos. v. 15. The straits of the children of men afford a large field for displaying his glorious perfections, which otherwise would be wanting, Exod. xv. 11.

5. A crook thus got evened is a double *mercy*. There are some crooks evened by a touch of the hand of common providence, while people are either not exercised about them, or when they fret for their removal; these are sapless mercies, and short lived, Psal. lxxviii. 30, 31.—Hos. xiii. 11. Fruits thus too hastily plucked off the tree of providence can hardly miss to set the teeth on edge, and will certainly be bitter to the gracious soul. But O the sweet of the evening of the crook got by a humble application to, and waiting on the Lord! It has the image and superscription of divine favour upon it, which makes it bulky and val-

uable, Gen. xxxiii. 10.—“For therefore I have
“seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of
“God,” &c. Chap. xxi. 6.

6. God has signalized his favour to his *dearest children*, in making and mending notable crooks in their lot. His darling ones ordinarily have the greatest crooks made in their lot, Heb. xii. 6. But then they make way for their richest experiences in the removal of them upon their application to him. This is clear from the case of Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph. Which of the patriarchs had so great crooks as they? but which of them, on the other hand, had so signal tokens of the divine favour? The greatest of men, as Samson [and the Baptist, have been born of women, naturally barren; so do the greatest crooks issue in the richest mercies to them that are exercised thereby.

7. It is the *shortest* and *surest* way to go straight to God with the crook in the lot. If we would have our wish in that point, we must, as the eagle, first soar aloft, and then come down on the prey, Mark v. 36. Our faithless out-of-the-way attempts to even the crook, are our fool's haste, that is no speed; as in the case of Abraham's going in to Hagar. God is the first mover, who sets all the wheels in motion for evening the crook, the which without him will remain immoveable, Hos. ii. 21, 22.

Object. 1. ‘But it is needless, for I see, that
‘though the crook in my lot may mend, yet I will
‘never mend. In its own nature it is capable of
‘being removed, but it is plain, it is not to be re-
‘moved, it is hopeless.’

Ans. That is the language of unbelieving haste, which faith and patience should correct, Psal. cxvii. 11, 12. Abraham had as much to say for the hope-

lessness of his crook, but yet he applies to God in faith for the mending of it, Rom. iv. 19, 20. Sarah had made such a conclusion, for which she was rebuked, Gen. xviii. 13, 14. Nothing can make it needless in such a case to apply to God.

Object. 2. ‘But I have applied to him again and again for it, yet it is never mended.’

Ans. Delays are not denials of suits at the court of heaven, but trials of the faith and patience of the petitioners. And whoso will hang on will certainly come speed at long-run, Luke xviii. 7, 8, 31. “And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?” ver. 8. “I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.” Sometimes indeed folks grow pettish, in the case of the crook in the lot, and let it drop out in their prayers, in a course of despondency, while yet it continues uneasy to them; but, if God mind to even it in mercy, he will oblige them to take it in again into them, Ezek. xxxvi. 37. “I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them,” &c. If the removal come, while it is dropt, there will be little comfort in it: though it were never to be removed while we live, that should not cut off our applying to God for the removal; for there are many prayers not to be answered till we come to the other world, and there all will be answered at once, Rom. vii. 24.

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

1. *Pray* for it, Ezek. xxxvi. 37. 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 other life, Matt. xxi. 22. They will not be disappointed that get the song of Moses and of the Lamb, Rev. xv. 3. And, in some cases of that nature, extraordinary prayer, with fasting, is very expedient, Matt. xvii. 21.

2. *Humble* yourselves under it, as the yoke which the sovereign hand has laid on you, Micah vii. 9. "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, James iv. 10.—When the bullock is broken and tamed, as accustomed to the yoke, then it is taken off, the end being obtained, Psal. x. 17. "Thou wilt prepare their hearts, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear."

3. Wait on *patiently* till the hand that made it mend it, Psal. xxvii. 14. Do not give up the matter as hopeless, because you are not so soon relieved as you would; "but let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing," James i. 4. 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, Isaiah lx. 22. "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," Isaiah xlix. 23.

Exhortation 2. What crook there is, that in the settled order of things, cannot be got 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, viz. 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 both 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 with-holding or taking away of which from you makes the crook in your lot, Psalm cxlii. 4, 5. There is never a crook God makes in our lot, but it is in effect heaven's offer of a blest exchange to us; Such as Mark x. 21. "Sell whatsoever thou hast, and thou shalt 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, Matt. xiii. 45. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls:" ver. 46. "who, when he had found one pearl of great price, he 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 *streams* 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 hang on for that from God which is denied us from the creature. "When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up," Psalm xxvii. 10. 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 O! but it is a welcome plea, to come to God and say, Now, Lord, thou hast taken away from me such a creature-comfort, I must have as good from thyself.

3. The *spiritual fruits* of the crook in the lot, Heb. xii. 11. 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 reach more faith, love, heavenly-mindedness, contempt of the world, humility, self denial, &c. 2 Cor. vi. 10. So, while we lose at one hand, we will gain at another.

4. *Grace* to carry us up under the crook, 2 Cor. xii. 8. "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice; ver. 9. And he said, My grace is sufficient for thee." Whether a man be faint, and have a light burden, or be refreshed, and strengthened, and have a heavy one, it is all a case; 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 be 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, 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. "For our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, worketh 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 that are not seen." This will balance the crook in your lot, be it 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 counter-balance it: yet 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* and *carry* under the crook in our lot, while God sees meet 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 firing, and fretting, or murmuring, James v. 7. Psalm xxxvii. 7. Though we lose our comfort in the creature, through the crook in our lot, let us not lose the possession of ourselves, Luke xxi. 19. The crook in our lot makes us like one who has but a scanty cold-rife fire to warm at: but impatience under it scatters it so as to set the house on fire about us, and exposeth us, Prov. xxv. 28. "He that hath 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 thou art rebuked of him," Heb. xii. 5. 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, Hab. iii. 17, 18. So that we are resolutely to hold on our way, with a holy contempt, and regardlessness of the hardships, Job xvii. 9. "The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger."

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

Ans. When it prevails so far as to unfit 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, 1 Cor. vii. 24. It is recorded to the commendation of Abraham, Gen. xxiii. 3, 4. Or for the duties of religion, hindering them altogether, 1 Pet. iii. 7.—"That your prayers be not hindered, (Greek, cut off, or up, like a tree from the roots,)" or making one quite hopeless in them, Mal. ii. 13.

3. *Profitably*, so as we may gain some advantage thereby, Psal. cxix. 71. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted that I might learn thy statutes." There is an advantage to be made thereby, Rom. v. 3, 4, 5. And it is certainly an ill-managed crook in our lot when we get not some spiritual good of it, Heb. xi. 21. The crook is a kind of spiritual medicine; and as it is lost physic that purges away no ill humours, but 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 wared, that we are not bettered by, Isa. xxvii. 9. "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. Consider,

1. There will be no evening of it while *God* sees meet to continue it. Let us carry under it as we will, and make what sallies we please in the case, it will continue immoveable, as fixed with bands of iron and brass, Job xxii. 13, 14. “But he is
 “of one mind, and who can turn him? And what
 “his soul desireth, even that he doth. Verse 14.
 “For he performeth 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 with a Christian resignation.

2. An aukward 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, Jer. xxxi. 18. 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 over-weight on the burden, and makes it heavier, while withal it weakens us, and makes us less able to bear it.

3. The crook in thy lot is the special *trial* God has chosen out for thee to take thy measure by, 1 Pet. i. 6, 7. It is God’s fire, whereby he tries what metal men are of; heaven’s touch-stone for discovering of true and counterfeit Christians. They may bear, and go through several trials, which the crook in the lot will discover to be naught, because by no means they can

bear that, Mark x. 21, 22. Think then with thyself under it, Now here the trial of my state turns, I must by this be proven 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? Acts ix. 6. Psal. xlvii. 4. And does he not tell us, that without that disposition we are not his disciples, Luke xiv. 26. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters; yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Perhaps you find you submit to any thing but that; but will not that *but* mar all? Mark x. 21. Did ever any hear of a sincere closing with Christ, with a reserve or exception of one thing, wherein they behoved 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, whereby the soul is brought to believe on him. Hereby the soul sees him an able Saviour, so trusts on him for salvation; the rightful Lord, and infinitely wise Ruler, and so submits the lot to him, Matt. xiii. 45, 46. The soul taking him for a Saviour, takes him also for a Head and Ruler. It is Christ's giving himself to us, and our receiving him, that causes us quit other things to and for him, as it is the light 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 it, and when the new man of grace is submitting it, the old man will still be reclaiming, Gal. v. 17. "For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. And these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would," but are sincerely desirous and habitually aiming to submit it. Do ye, 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 yourselves, that ye cannot submit it? This is submitting of your lot, in the favourable construction of the gospel, Rom. vii. 17—20. 2 Cor. viii. 12. If ye had your choice, would ye rather have your heart brought to submit to the crook, than the crook evened to your heart's desire? Rom. vii. 22, 23. And, do ye not sincerely endeavour to submit it over the belly of the reluctance of flesh? Gal. v. 17.

2. Where is the Christian *self-denial*, and taking up of the *cross*, without submitting to the crook? This is the first lesson Christ puts in the hands of his disciples, Matt. xvi. 24. "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 meet especially to be denied in, we cannot bear the crook in our lot, but fight against it, in favour of self.

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 saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk even as he walked," 1 John ii. 6. There was a continued crook in Christ's lot, but he submitted to it, Phil. ii. 8. "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," Rom. xv. 3. *For even Christ pleased not himself, &c.* And so must we, if we will prove ourselves Christians indeed, Matt. xi. 29. 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12.

4. How will we *prove* ourselves the genuine kindly children of God, if still warring with the crook? We cannot pray, *Our father,—Thy will be done on earth, &c.* Matt. vi. 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, 1 Cor. viii. 31. What though the work be sore, it may be the better comported with, that it will not be longsome; a few days or years at farthest will put an end to it, and take you off your trials. Do not say, I will never be eased of it; for if ye be not eased before, ye will be eased of it at death, come in the room of it after what will. A serious view of death and eternity, might make us to set ourselves to carry rightly under our crook while it lasteth.

5. If ye would, in a Christian manner, set yourselves to bear the crook ye would find it easier than ye imagine, Matt. xi. 29, 30. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me—and ye shall find rest to your souls." ver. 30. "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 ye will never be able to bear it. But the Lord makes no crook in the lot of any, but what may be so borne of them acceptably, though not sinlessly and perfectly, Mat. xi. 30. For there is strength for that effect secured in the covenant, 2 Cor. iii. 5. Phil. iv. 13. and being by faith fetched, it will certainly come, Psalm xxviii. 7.

6. If ye carry Christianly under your crook here, ye will not lose your labour, but get a full reward of grace in the other world, through Christ, 3 Tim. ii. 12. 1 Cor. xv. 58. There is a blessing pronounced on him that endureth on this very ground, James i. 12. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for, when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." Heaven is the place into which the approven, upon the trial of the crook, are received, Rev. vii. 14. "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 we come there, no vestiges of it will be remaining in your lot, nor will ye have the least uneasy remembrance of it; but it will accent your praises, and screw up your joy.

7. If you do not carry Christianly under it, ye will lose your souls in the other world, Jude, ver. 15, 16. Those who are at war with God in their lot here, God will have war with them for ever. If they will not submit to his yoke here, and go quietly under it, he will wreathe his yoke about their neck for ever, with everlasting bonds that shall never be loosed, Job ix. 4.

Lastly, Whatever crook is in the lot of any, it is very likely there is a public crook abiding the generation, that will be more trying. This is a day of sinning, beyond the days of our fathers; a day wherein God is making great crooks in the lot of the dearest to himself; but these seem to presage such a general public crook to be abiding the generation, as will make our now private ones of very little weight, 1 Pet. iv. 17, 18. Therefore, set yourselves to carry rightly under the crook in your lot.

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

DOCT. III. *The considering the crook in the lot, as the work of God, is a proper means to bring one to carry rightly under it.*

I. What it is to consider the crook as the *work* of God, we take it up in these five things.

First, An enquiry into the *spring* whence it riseth, Gen. xxv. 22. Reason and religion both teach us, not only to notice the crook, which we cannot avoid, but to consider and enquire 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, Job v. 6. And we are to notice the hand from whence it comes.

Secondly, A perceiving of the *hand* of God in it. Whatever hand any creature hath therein, we ought not to terminate our view in them, but look above and beyond them to the supreme manager's agency therein, Job i. 21. Without this we make a god of the creature instrumental of the crook,

looking on it as if it were the first cause, which is peculiar to God, Rom. xi. 36. and bring ourselves under that doom, Psalm xxviii. 5. "Because they regard not 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 hath 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 whence 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 unto God, as if no other hand were in it, his being always the principal therein. "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good," 1 Sam. iii. 18. Thus David overlooked Shemei, and looked to God in the matter of his cursing, as one would the ax, fixing his eye on him that wielded it. Here two things are to come into consideration:

1st, The *decree* of God purposing that crook for us from eternity: "for he worketh all things by the counsel of his own will," Eph. i. 11. the sealed book in which are written all the black lines that make the crook. Whatever valley of darkness, grief, and sorrow we are carried through, we are to look on them as made by the mountains of brass, the immoveable divine purposes, Zech. vi. 1. This can be no presumption in that case, if we carry it no farther than the event goes in our sight and feeling; for so far the book is opened for us to look into.

2dly, The *providence* of God bringing to pass that crook for us in time, Amos iii. 6. 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 be in theirs. Job considered both these, chap. xxiii. 14.

Fourthly, A continuing in the *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, whereby it may slip into our minds, as occasion calls expressly.

2dly, 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 gall 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 the 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 the *end* for which it is proposed to us, *viz.* to bring to a dutiful carriage under it. Men's corruptions will cause them to enter on this consideration: and as is the prin-

ciple, so will the end and effect of it be corrupt, 2 Kings vi. 33. 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 carry rightly under the crook.

1. *Negatively*; Not as if it were sufficient of itself, and as it stands alone, to produce that effect. But,

2. *Positively*; 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 carry rightly under it; but having believed in Jesus Christ, and so the crook as the work of God, his God, is the proper means to bring him to that desirable temper and behaviour. Many hearers mistake here. When they hear such and such law-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 corrupt 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 them that have limbs. Innocent Adam had a stock of gracious abilities, whereby he might have, by the force of moral considerations, brought himself to perform duty aright. But where is that with us? 2 Cor. iii. 5. Whatever force be in them to a soul endowed with spiritual life, what force is in them, to raise the dead, such as we are? Eph. ii. 1.

Secondly, The scripture is very plain on this head, shewing the indispensable necessity of faith, Heb. xi.—And that such as unites to Christ, John xv. 5. “Without me,” that is, separate from me, “ye can do nothing;” no not, with all the moral considerations ye can use. How were the ten commandments given on Mount Sinai? not bare exactions of duty, but fronted with the gospel, to be believed in the first place. “I am the Lord thy “God,” &c. And so Solomon, whom many do 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 we must 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 would see him more in every page, and in every command, receiving the law at his mouth.

Thirdly, Do but consider what it is to carry rightly under the crook in the lot, what humiliation of soul, self-denial, and absolute resignation to the will 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 thereof; and try and see if it is not impossible for you to reach

it without that faith afore-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. O what kind of hearts do they imagine themselves to have, that think they can for a moment empty them of the creature, farther 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 behaviour 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 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 uprightly are only for the living, that have the use of their limbs ; and therefore, that ye 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 carry 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 these things about the crook, which serve to irritate our corruption. Such are the baulking of our will and wishes, the satisfaction we would 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 consi-

derations is but the blowing of fire within; but to turn our eyes to it as the work of God, would be a cure by way of diversion, 2 Sam. vi. 9, 10. And such diversion of the thoughts is not only lawful, but expedient and necessary.

2. It has a moral aptitude for producing the 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, Eph. v. 14. This consideration has a moral efficacy on our reason, is fit to awe us into a submission, and ministers a deal of argument for carrying Christianly under our crook.

3. It hath a divine appointment on it for that end, which is to be believed, Prov. iii. 6. So the text. The creature in itself is an inefficacious and moveless thing, a mere vanity, Acts xvii. 28. What makes any thing a means fit for the end, is a word of divine appointment, Matt. iv. 4. To use any thing 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, 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5. And every thing 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 none of his own tools, but devised of their hearts. And since 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 carrying right 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 make it tolerable, Psalm xxii. 1, 2, 3. 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, Psalm cxlii. 4, 5. (2.) In all your encounters with it, resolutely to believe, and claim your interest in him, 1 Sam. xxx. 6.

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, shewing he wrongs you not; 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, ye would otherwise be apt to

run into; a trying work, to discover your state, your graces, and corruptions; 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, 1 Cor. iii. 6.—Thus may ye carry Christianly under it, till God even it either here or in heaven.

PROV. XVI. 19.

Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.

COULD men once be brought to believe, that it is better to have their minds brought to ply with the crook in their lot, than to force even the crook to their mind, they would then be in a fair way to bring their matters, in that case, 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 wherein they vastly differ.

1st, The parties are the *lowly* and the *proud*, who differ like heaven and the centre of the earth: the proud are ay 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.

(1.) 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, whereby 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.

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

2dly, The points wherein these parties are supposed to differ, *viz.* 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 Hanna, Job, &c. The proud may sometimes be thrown down and crushed, as Pharoah, 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 humble 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:

(1.) On the one hand, to be of a humble spirit with afflicted lowly ones, (Heb.) 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.

(2.) 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, wherein the former is preferred to the latter; "Better it is to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud," &c. 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-bended spirit, have their lot brought up to their mind. A humble spirit is better than a heightened condition.

DOCT. *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.*

I. 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, as bad as the world is. The text expressly mentions them, and the scripture elsewhere makes mention of them; as Psalm ix. 12. and x. 12. Matt. v. 3. with Luke vi. 20. 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 this 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 in heart," Matt. xi. 29. And for his honour, and the honour of his cross, they will never be wanting while the world stands, Rom. viii. 29. "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, whereof holiness is a chief part.

3. Nevertheless they are certainly very rare in the world. Agur observes, that there is another generation, (Prov xxx. 13. "Their eyes are lofty, and their eye-lids 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 bended spirit keeps on the bend 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, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. Men may put on a face of submission to a low and crost 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, Acts xiv. 22. and all Christ's followers are reconciled to it notwithstanding, Luke xiv. 26. yet there are some of them more remarkably disciplined than others, whose spirit however is thereby humbled, and brought down to their lot, Psalm cxxxi. 2. "Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother; my soul is even as a weaned child." Phil. iv. 11, 12. "For I have learned in whatsoever state I am therein to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."

6. A lowly disposition of soul, and habitual aim and bent of the heart that way, has a very favourable 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 would find none in this world: but those who are sincerely aiming and endeavouring to reach it, and keep the way of contented submission, though sometimes they are blown aside, and returning to it again, God accounts to be that lowly generation, 2 Corin. viii. 12. James v. 11.

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

1st, Affliction in their lot. That lowly generation, preferred to the proud and prosperous, are 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, Psalm lxxiii. 14. If there be *silence in heaven*, it is but for *half an hour*, Rev. viii. 1. God is frequently visiting them as a master doth his scholars, and a physician his patients ; whereas others are in a sort overlooked by him, Rev. iii. 19. They are accustomed to the yoke, and that from the time they enter into God's family, Psal. cxxix. 1, 2, 3. God sees it good for them, Lam. iii. 27, 28.

2. There is a particular yoke of affliction, which God has chosen for them, that hangs about them, and is seldom, if ever, taken off them, Luke ix. 28. 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.

2dly, 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, 2 Cor. xii. 11 ; what they can do, 2 Cor. iii. 5. ; what they are worth, Gen. xxxii. 10. ; and what they deserve, Lam. iii. 22. Viewing themselves in the glass of the divine law and

perfection, they see themselves as a mass of imperfection and sinfulness, Job xlii. 5, 6.

2. They think highly and honourably of God, Psal. cxliv. 3. They are taught by the Spirit what God is; and so entertain elevated thoughts 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, Heb. xi. 8.

3. They think favourably of others, as far as in justice they may, Phil. ii. 3. Though they cannot hinder themselves to see 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 thereof, 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, Psal. cxxxi. 1, 2. 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, *Thy 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, Psalm xlvii. 4.

5. They are not bent on high things, but disposed to stoop to low things, Psalm cxxxi. 1. 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 grace, 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26.

6. They are apt to magnify mercies bestowed on them, Gen. xxvii. 10. Pride of heart overlooks and vilifies mercies one is possess of, and fixeth 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 possess, or yet do, Job ii. 10.

3dly, 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*. Mic. vii. 9. "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 we kiss the rod, and be silent under it, and so lower our spirits to our lot. If they complain, they have their complaints on themselves; their hearts rise not up against the Lord, far less do they open their mouths 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, Lam. iii. 26,—29. *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 sitteth alone, and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him; he putteth his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope.* While the unsubdued spirit rageth under the yoke, as a bullock 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 these overweights upon it that turbulent passions add thereunto; 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 airth than their outward condition, even as the house stands fast when the prop is taken away that it did not lean upon. "Al-though the fig-tree should not blossom, neither fruit be in the vine, yet I will rejoice in the Lord," Hab. iii. 17, 18. Thus did David in the day of his distress, "he encouraged himself in the Lord his God," 1 Sam. xxx. 6. It is an argument of a spirit not brought down to the lot, when one is damped and sunk under the hardships of it, as if their condition in the world were the point whereon their happiness turned. It is want of mortification that makes men's comforts 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, Isa. xxxix. 8. 2 Cor. xii. 10. 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 ministred by their heavenly Father: and so they reach a holy complacency in their low afflicted lot.

The lowly spirit extracts this sweet out of the bitterness in 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 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 meet to bring them out with his goodwill, Isa. xxviii. 16. 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 a moving for a change, till the heavens moving bring it about: so this hinders not prayer, and the use of appointed means, with dependence on the Lord; but requires faith, hope, patience, and resignation, 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26.

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 over-ruling 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, Eccl. i. 14. Sin has turned the world from a paradise into a thicket, there is no getting through without being scratch'd. As

the 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, Esth. v. 13. 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 sets them; hence they can by no means bear the yoke God lays on them. The neck is swollen with the ill humours of pride and passion; hence, 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 the proud mind says, The man should not stoop to the yoke; it is below them. What a swelling vanity is in that, Exod. v. 2. "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?" Hence 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; whence 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 in deed; 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 it says he will not stoop, *Exod. v. 2.* The question betwixt heaven and us, is, Whether God's will or our own must carry it? 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 be broken, *Rom. vi. 7. Isa. xlvi. 4.*

3. They have a crowd of unsubdued passions taking part with the self-will; and they say, He shall not stoop, *Rom. vii. 8, 9.*; and so the war begins, and there is a field of battle within and without the man, *James iv. 1.*

(1.) A holy God crosses the self-will of the proud creatures by his providence, over-ruling and disposing of things contrary to their inclination; sometimes by his own immediate hand, as in the case of Cain, *Gen. iv. 4, 5.* sometimes by the hand of men carrying things against their mind, as in the case of Ahab, to whom Naboth refused his vineyard, *1 Kings xxi. 4.*

(2.) The proud heart and will, unable to submit to the cross, or to bear to be controuled, 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, *viz.* discontent, impatience, murmuring, frettings, and the like. "The foolishness of man perverteth his way; and his heart fretteth against the Lord," *Prov. xix. 3.* These fire the breast, fall the countenance, *Gen. iv. 6.* let off sometimes

a volley of indecent and passionate complaints, Jude, ver. 16. and sometimes of blasphemies, 2 Kings vi. 33.

2. There is another that marches forward, and makes an attack on the instrument or instruments of the cross, viz. anger, wrath, fury, revenge, bitterness, &c. Prov. xxvii. 4. These carry the man out of the possession of himself, Luke xxi. 19. fill the heart with a boiling heat, Psal. xxxix. 3. the mouth with clamour and evil-speaking, Eph. iv. 31. and threatenings are breathed out, Acts ix. 1. and sometimes set the hands on work, which has a most heavy event, Matt. v. 21, 22. 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, Exod. xv. 9, 10. But that is not the case in the text. 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, Gen. vi. 3. God sees it meet to let the struggle with him fall, for it prevails not to his good, Isa. i. 5. 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," Hos. iv. 17.

2. The lust remaining in its strength and vigour, Psalm lxxviii. 30. "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, Psalm x. 17. But here the lust remains rampant; the proud seek meat for it, and get it.

3. The cross removed, the yoke taken off, Psalm lxxviii. 29. 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, 1 Kings xxi. 18, 19.

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 a 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 go to will and wish, according to one's mind. This will appear from the following considerations.

1st, Humility is so far preferable to pride, that in no circumstances whatsoever its preferableness can fail. Let all the afflictions in a 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 piece 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*, Matt. xi. 29. None more afflicted,

yet his spirit perfectly brought down to his lot. Isa. liii. 7. "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth." That is a shining piece of the divine image: for though God cannot be low in respect of his state and condition, yet he is of infinite condescension, Isa. lvii. 15. None bears as he, Rom. ii. 4. 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 endured so much contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds," Heb. xii. 3.

Pride, on the other hand, is the very image of the devil, 1 Tim. iii. 6. Will we value ourselves on the height of our spirits? Satan will vie with the highest of us in that point: for, 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: and 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: and therefore he will be eternally in a state of war with his lot. Hence, 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 any thing 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 qualifies us for friendly communion and intercourse with God

in Christ. Pride makes God our enemy, 1 Pet. v. 5. Our happiness here and hereafter depends on our friendly intercourse with heaven. If we have not that, nothing can make up our loss, Psalm xxx. 5. If we have that, nothing can make us miserable, Rom. viii. 31. "If God be 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 blesses them, and declares them the heirs of the crown of glory: "blessed be the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," Matt. v. 3. He will look to them, be their condition ever so low, while he overlooks others, Isa. lxvi. 2. He will have respect to them, however they be despised: "Tho' the Lord be high, yet hath he respect to the lowly; but the proud he knoweth afar off," Psal. cxxxviii. 6. He will dwell with them, however poorly they dwell, Isa. lvii. 15. He will certainly exalt them in due time, however low they lie now, Isa. xl. 4.

Whom is he against? whom does he resist? The proud. Them he curseth, Jer. xvii. 5. 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, Isa. xl. 4. Psal. xviii. 27.

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, Isa. lvii. 15. 1 Tim. iii. 6. God requires us to be humble, especially under affliction, "and be clothed with humility," 1 Pet.

v. 5, 6. That is our becoming garment. The humble Publican was accepted, the proud Pharisee rejected. We may say of the generation of the proud, as 1 Thess. ii. 16.—“Wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.” They please neither God nor men, but only themselves and Satan, whom they resemble in it. Now, duty is ay better than sin at any rate.

2dly, 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, that, on the one hand,

1. 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, Dan. v. 6.—And where this is maintained nothing can make it miserable, John xvi. 33. This being secured in God, there is a defiance bid to all the troubles of the world, Psalm xlvi. 2, 3, 4. Like the child sailing in the midst of the rolling waves.

2. The spirit brought down to the lot makes and maintains this inward tranquility. Our whole trouble in our lot in the world riseth from the disagreement of our mind therewith; let the mind be brought to the lot and the whole tumult is instantly husht; 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, Col. iii. 15. “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called.”

On the other hand consider,

1. What disquiet of mind the proud do suffer ere 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,” Jer. ix. 5. James iv. 2. “Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain; ye fight and war, yet ye have not.”—What arrows of grief go thro’ their heart? what torture of anxiety, fretting, and vexation must they endure? what contrary passions do fight within them? and what sallies of passions do they make? what uneasiness was Haman in, before he could carry the point of the revenge against Mordecai obtaining the king’s decree?

2. When the thing is got to their mind, it will not quit the cost. The enjoyment thereof brings not 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; and in that case, Psal. lxxviii. 30, 31. There is a dead fly in the ointment that mars the savour they expected to find in it. Fruit pluckt off the tree of providence, ere it is ripe, will readily set the teeth on edge. It proves like the manna kept over night, Exod. xvi. 20.

3. They have but an unsure grip of it; it doth not last with them, Either it is taken from them soon, and they are just where they were again: “I gave thee a king in my anger, and took him away in my wrath.” Hos. xiii. 11. 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 ere the day of the execution came he was gone.

3dly, They that get their spirit brought down to their afflicted lot, do gain a point far more valuable than they who in their pride force up their lot to their mind, Prov. xvi. 32. “He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty; and he that ru-

“leth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.” This will appear, if ye 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 conveniencies 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, but 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, Luke xxi. 19. Whereas, in the other case, we are still slaves to the worst of masters, Rom. vi. 16. In the one case we are safe, blow what storm will; in the other we lie exposed to thousands of dangers, Prov. xxv. 28. “He that hath 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 bring their spirit to their lot; the other, 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, Rom. ii. 16.

An afflicted lot is painful, but where it is well managed, it is very fruitful; it exercises the graces of the Spirit in 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, Mal. iii. 16. 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 war in which the spoil is divided!

Use 1. Of information. Hence we may learn,

1. It is not always best for folk 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, Psal. lxxxix. 11, 12. "Israel would none of me, so I gave them up to their own heart's lust; and they walked in their own counsels." It may be pleasantest and gratefullest for the time, but it is not the safest. Let not people pride themselves in their carrying things that way then by strong hand; let them not triumph on 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 thereby, if his spirit is brought down to it. And if he will see his case 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, Psalm. lxxviii. 29, 30, 31. In the other, the vessels of mercy are fitted for glory, and so God disciplines his own, Lam. iii. 27.

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 honourable; for what honour can there be in

a 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, 1 Sam. ii. 9. "For, by strength shall no man prevail."

Lastly, It is of far 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, whereby their thirst may be carried off.

Use 2. Of exhortation. As you meet with crosses in your lot in the world, let your bent be rather to have your spirit humbled and brought down, than to get the cross moved. I mean not but that ye 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 unhumbléd spirit. The humbling will lighten the cross mightily for the time, Matt. xi. 30, and in due time carry it cleanly off, 1 Pet. v. 6. But the removal of the cross is not a means to humble the unhumbléd;

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 ere 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 ere we have given any good proof of ourselves, and so to be given over of our physician as hopeless, Isa. i. 5. Hos. iv. 17.

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 ye be *humbled under the mighty hand of God*; and, in due time, *he will lift you up*.

1 PETER V. 6.

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.

IN the preceding part of this chapter, the apostle presseth the duties of 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 shew-

ing favour to the other. Our text is an exhortation drawn from that consideration; And in it we have,

1st. The *duty* we are therefore to study: *humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.* And therein we may notice,

1. The *state* of those whom it is proposed to, those *under the mighty hand of God*, whom his hand has humbled, or stated some way low in respect of their circumstances in the world. And by these are, I think, 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 any manner 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, husbands, parents, masters; and these again to their superiors; among whom, again, even the highest depends on those under them, as magistrates, ministers on the people, even the supreme magistrate being *major singulis, minor universis*. This state of the world God has made for taking 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 cometh the end—when we shall have put down all rule, and authority, and power," 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25. Mean time 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, viz. 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 it is we are under particular afflictions, which have cast us down from the height we were sometimes 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 therein eye the mighty hand of God, as that which placed us there, and is over us there to hold us down in it: and so, with an awful regard thereto, crouch 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 relations, 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 favour that compose themselves under it, to a quiet discharge of their duty in their situation; so that eyeing this we must set ourselves to humble ourselves.

2dly, 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, John ix. 2. 1 John ii. 19. So here, the meaning is not, *Humble yourselves, on design he may exalt you*; but, and it shall issue in his exalting you. Compare James iv. 10.

(1.) Here is a happy *event* of humiliation of spirit secured, and that is exaltation or lifting up on

high, by the power of God, *that he may exalt you.* Exalting will as surely follow on humiliation of spirit, suitable to the low lot, as the morning follows the night, or the sun riseth after the dawning. And these words are fitted to obviate the objection that the world and our corrupt hearts are apt to make against bringing down the spirit to the low lot.

Object. 1. If we let our spirit fall, we will lie always among folks feet, and they will trample on us.

Ans. No; pride of spirit unsubdued, will bring men to lie among the feet of others for ever, Isa. lxvi. 24. But humiliation of spirit will bring them undoubtedly out from among their feet, Mal. iv. 2, 3. They that humble themselves now will be exalted for ever; they will be brought out of their low situation and circumstances. Cast ye yourselves even down with your low lot, and assure yourselves ye shall not lie there.

Object. 2. If we do not raise ourselves, none will raise us; and therefore we must see to ourselves, to do ourselves right.

Ans. That is wrong. Humble ye yourselves in respect of your spirits, and God will raise you up in respect of your lot, or low condition; and they that have God engaged for raising them, have no reason to say they have none to do it for them. Bringing down of the spirit is our duty, raising us up is God's work; let us not forfeit the privilege of God's raising us up, by arrogating that work to ourselves, taking it out of his hand.

Object. 3. But sure we will never rise high, if we let our spirits fall.

Ans. That is wrong too: God will not only raise humble ones, but he will lift them up *on high*; for

so the word signifies. They shall be as high at length as ever they were low, were they ever so low; nay, the exaltation will bear proportion to the humiliation.

(2.) Here is the *date* of that happy event, when it will fall out. In *due time*, or in the season, the proper season for it, Gal. vi. 9. "In due season we shall reap, if we faint not." We are apt to weary in humbling trying circumstances, and ay we would have up our head, John vii. 6. But Solomon observes, there is a time for every thing when it does best, and the wise will wait it, Eccl. iii. 1—8. There is a time too for exalting them that humble themselves; God has set it, and it is the *due time* for the purpose, the time when it does best, even as sowing in the spring, and reaping in the harvest. When that time comes, your exalting shall no longer be put off, and it would come too soon should it come before that time.

DOCT. I. *The bent of one's heart, in humbling circumstances, should lie towards a suitable humbling of spirit, as under God's mighty hand placing us in them.* We have here,

I. Some things *supposed* in this. It supposeth and bears in it, that,

1. God *brings* men into humbling circumstances, Ezek. xvii. 24. "And all the trees of the field shall know, that I the Lord have brought down the high tree." There is a root of pride in the hearts of all men on earth; that must be mortified ere they can be meet for heaven: and therefore no man can miss, in this time of trial, some things that will give a proof whether he can stoop or no. And God brings them into humbling cir-

cumstances for that very end, Deut. viii. 2. "The Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, and to know what was in thine heart."

2. These circumstances prove *pressing* as a weight on the heart, tending to bear it down, Psal. cvii. 12. "Therefore he brought down their heart with labour."—They strike at the grain of the heart, and cross the natural inclination: whence a trial naturally ariseth, whether, when God lays on his mighty hand, the man can yield under it, or not; and consequently, whether he is meet for heaven or not.

3. The heart is naturally apt to *rise* up against these humbling circumstances, and consequently against the mighty hand that brings and keeps them on. The man naturally bends his force to get off the weight, that he may get up his head, seeking more to please himself than to please his God, Job xxxv. 9, 10. "They cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty: But none saith, Where is God my Maker?" This is the first gate the heart runs to in humbling circumstances; and in this way the unsubdued spirit holds on.

4. But what God requires, is, rather to labour to bring *down* the heart, than to *get up* the head, James iv. 10. Here lies the proof of one's meetness for heaven; and then is one in the way heaven-ward, when he is more concerned to get down his heart than up his head, to go calmly under his burden than to get it off, to crouch under the mighty hand than to put it off him.

5. There must be a *noticing* of God as our party, in humbling circumstances; "Hear ye the rod, and him who hath appointed it," Mic. vi. 9. There is an abjectness of spirit, whereby some

give up themselves to the will of others, in the harshest treatment, merely to please them, without regard to the authority and command of God. This is real meanness of spirit, whereby one lies quietly to be trampled on by a fellow-worm, from its imaginary weight; and none so readily fall into it as the proud, at sometimes, to serve their own turn, Acts xii. 22. These are men-pleasers, Eph. vi. 6. with Gal. i. 10.

II. What are these *humbling* circumstances the mighty hand of God brings them into. Supposing here what was before taught concerning the crook in the lot's being of God's making, these are circumstances,

1. Of *imperfection*. God has placed all men in such circumstances under a variety of wants and imperfections, Phil. iii. 12. We can look no where, where we are not beset with them. There is a heap of natural and moral imperfections about us: our bodies and our souls, in all their faculties, are in a state of imperfection. The pride of all glory is stained; and it is a shame for us not to be humbled under such wants as attend us; it is like a beggar strutting in his rags.

2. Of *inferiority* in relations, whereby men are set in the lower place in relations and society, and made to depend on others, 2 Cor. vii. 24. God has, for a trial of men's submission to himself, subjected them to others whom he has set over them, to discover what regard they will pay to his authority and commands at second hand. Dominion or superiority is a part of the divine image shining in them, 1 Cor. xi. 7. And therefore reverence of them, consisting in an awful regard to that ray of the divine image shining in them, is necessarily required, Eph. v. 33. Heb.

xii. 9. compare Psalm cxi. 9. The same holds in all other relations and superiorities, viz. that they are so far in the place of God to their relatives, Psalm lxxxii. 6. And though the parties be worthless in themselves, that he looseth not one from the debt to them, Acts xxiii. 4, 5. Rom. xiii. 7. the reason is, because it is not their qualities, but their character, which is the ground of that debt of reverence and subjection; and the trial God takes of us in that matter turns not on the point of the former, but of the latter.

Now, God having placed us in these circumstances of inferiority, all refractoriness in all things, not contrary to the command of God, is a rising up against his mighty hand, Rom. xiii. 2. because it is mediately upon us for that effect, though it is man's hand that is immediately on us.

3. Of *contradiction*, tending directly to balk us of our will. This was a part of our Lord's state of humiliation, and the apostle supposes it will be a part of ours too, Heb. xii. 3. There is a perfect harmony in heaven, no one to contradict another there: for they are in their state of retribution and exaltation: but we are here in our state of trial and humiliation, and therefore cannot miss contradiction, be we placed ever so high.

Whether these contradictions be just or unjust, God trysts men with them to humble them, break them off from addictedness to their own will, and to teach them resignation and self-denial. They are in their own nature humbling, and much the same to us, as the breaking of a horse or a bullock is to them. And I believe there are many cases in which there can be no accounting for them, but by recurring to this use God has for them.

4. Of affliction, Prov. xvi. 19. *Prosperity puffs up sinners with pride*; and, O! but it is hard to keep a low spirit with a high and prosperous lot. But God, by affliction, calls men down from their heights to sit in the dust, plucks away their jay-feathers wherein they prided themselves, rubs the paint and varnish from off the creature, whereby it appears more in its native deformity. There are various kinds of affliction, some more, some less humbling, but all of them are humbling.

Wherefore, not to lower the spirit under the affliction, is to pretend to rise up when God is casting and holding down; with a witness; and cannot miss, if continued in, to provoke the Lord to break us in pieces, Ezek. xxiv. 13. For the afflicting hand is mighty.

5. Of *sin*, as the punishment of sin. We may allude to that, Job xxx. 19. All the sin in the world is a punishment of Adam's first sin. Man threw himself into the mire at first, and now he is justly left weltering in it. Men wilfully make one false step, and for that cause they are justly left to make another worse; and sin hangs about all, even the best. And this is over-ruled of God for our humiliation, that we may be ashamed, and never open our mouth any more. Wherefore, not to be humbled under our sinfulness, is to rise up against the mighty hand of God, and to justify all our sinful departings from him, as lost to all sense of duty, and void of shame.

III. What it is in humbling circumstances, to *humble* ourselves under the mighty hand of God. This is the great thing to be aimed at in our humbling circumstances. And we may take it up in these eight things.

1. Noticing the *mighty hand*, as employed in bringing about every thing that concerns us, either in the way of efficacy or permission, 1 Sam. iii. 18. "And he said, It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." 2 Sam. xvi. 10. "And the king said, The Lord hath said unto him, Curse David: Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?" He is the fountain of all perfection, but we must trace our imperfections to his sovereign will. It is he that has posted every one in their relations by his providence; without him we could not meet with such contradictions; for, "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whither-soever he pleaseth," Prov. xxi. 1. He sends on afflictions, and he justly punishes one sin with another, Isa. vi. 10.

2. A sense of our own *worthlessness* and *nothingness* before him, Psalm cxliv. 3. Looking to the infinite Majesty of the mighty hand dealing with us, we should say, with Abraham, Gen. xviii. 27. "Behold I am but dust and ashes;" and say Amen to the cry, Isa. xl. 6. *All flesh is grass, &c.* The keeping up of thoughts of our own excellency, under the pressures of the mighty hand, is the very thing that swells the heart in pride, causing it to rise up against it. And it is the letting of all such thoughts of ourselves fall before the eyes of his glory, that is the humbling required.

3. A sense of our *guilt* and *filthiness*, Rom. iii. 10. Isa. lxiv. 6. The mighty hand doth not press us down, but as sinners; it is meet then that under it we see our sinfulness; our guilt, whereby we will appear criminals justly caused to suffer; our filthiness, whereupon we may be brought to

lothe ourselves; and then we'll think nothing lays us lower than we well deserve. It is the overlooking our sinfulness that suffers the proud heart to swell.

4. A silent *submission* under the hand of God. His sovereignty challengeth this of us, Rom. ix. 20. "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?"—And nothing but unsubdued height and pride of spirit can allow us to answer again under the sovereign hand. A view of the sovereign hand humbled and awed the Psalmist into a submission, with a profound silence, Psalm xxxix. 9. "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it."—Job i. 21. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."—And xl. 4, 5. "What shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer: yea, twice, but I will proceed no further." And Eli, 1 Sam. iii. 18. "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good."

5. A *magnifying* of his *mercies* towards us in the midst of all his proceedings against us, Psalm cxliv. 3. Has he laid us low? If we be duly humbled we will wonder he has laid us no lower, Ezra ix. 13. For, however low the humble are laid, they will see they are not yet so low as their sins deserve, Lam. iii. 22.

6. A holy and silent *admiration* of the ways and counsels of God, as to us unsearchable, Rom. xi. 33. Pride of heart thinks nothing too high for the man, and so arraigns before its tribunal the divine proceedings, pretends to see thro' them, censures freely and condemns; but humiliation of spirit disposes a man to think awfully and honourably of the mysteries of Providence he is not able to see through.

7. A forgetting and laying aside before the Lord all our *dignity*, whereby we excel others, Rev. iv. 10. Pride feeds itself on the man's real or imaginary personal excellency and dignity, and, being so inured to it before others, cannot forget it before God. Luke xviii. 11. "God, I thank thee "I am not as other men." But humiliation of spirit makes it all to vanish before him as doth the shadow before the shining sun, and it lays the man in his own eyes, lower than any. "Surely I "am more brutish than any man, and have not "the understanding of a man." Prov. xxx. 2.

8. A submitting readily to the *meanest offices* requisite in, or agreeable to our circumstances. Pride at every turn finds something that is below the man to condescend or stoop to, measuring by his own mind and will, not by the circumstances God has placed him in. But humility measures by the circumstances one is placed in, and readily falls in with what they require. Hereof our Saviour gave us an example, (Phil. ii. 8. "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death,") to be imitated, John xiii. 14. "If I then your Lord "and Master have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet."

Use. Of exhortation. Let the bent of your heart then, in all your humbling circumstances, be towards the humbling of your spirit, as under the mighty hand of God. This lies in two things.

1. Carefully notice *all* your humbling circumstances, and overlook none of them. Observe your imperfections; inferiority in relations; contradictions you meet with; your afflictions; uncertainty of all things about you; and your sinfulness.—Look thro' them designedly, and consider the steps of the conduct of Providence towards

you in these, that ye may know yourselves, and may not be strangers at home, blind to your own real state and case.

2. Observing what these circumstances do *require* of you, as suitable to them; bend your endeavours towards it, to bring your spirits into the temper of humiliation, that as your lot is really low in all these respects, so your spirits may be low too, as under the mighty hand of God. Let this be your great aim through your whole life, and your exercise every day.

Motive 1. God is certainly at work to humble one and all of us. However high any are lifted up in this world, Providence has hung certain badges for humiliation on them, whether they will notice them or not, Isa. xl. 6. Now, it is our duty to fall in with the design of Providence, that while God is humbling us, we may be humbling ourselves, and that we may not receive humbling dispensations in vain.

2. The humiliation of our spirit will not take effect without our own agency therein; while God is working on us that way, we must work together with him, for he works on us as rational agents, who being moved, move themselves, Phil. ii. 12, 13. God by his providence may force down our lot and condition without us, but the spirit must come down voluntarily and of choice, or not at all; therefore, strike in with humbling providences in humbling yourselves, as mariners spread out the sails when the wind begins to blow, that they may go away before it.

3. If ye do not, ye resist the mighty hand of God, Acts vii. 51. Ye resist in so far as ye do not yield, but stand as a rock keeping your ground.

against your Maker in humbling providences, Jer. v. 3. "Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction. They have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return." Much more when ye work against him to force up your condition, which we may see God means to hold down. And of this resistance consider,

(1.) The *sinfulness*; what an evil thing it is. It is a direct fighting against God, a shaking off of subjection to our sovereign Lord, and a rising in rebellion against him, Isa. xlv. 9.

(2.) The *folly* of it. How unequal is the match? How can the struggle end well? Job ix. 4. What else can possibly be the issue of the potsherd's of the earth dashing against the Rock of ages, but that they be broken to pieces? We may say, as Job xli. 8. All men must certainly bow or break under the mighty hand.

4. This is the time of humiliation, even the time of this life. *Every thing is beautiful in its season*; and the bringing down of the spirit now is beautiful, as in the time thereof, even as the plowing and sowing of the ground is in the spring. Consider,

(1.) Humiliation of spirit *is in the sight of God of great price*, 1 Pet. iii. 4. As he has a special aversion to pride of heart, he has a special liking of humility, chap. v. 5. The humbling of sinners, and bringing them down from their heights, wherein the corruption of their nature has set them, is the great end of his word, and of his providence.

(2.) It is no easy thing to humble men's spirits; it is not little that will do it; it is a work that is

not soon done. There is need of a digging deep for a thorough humiliation in the work of conversion, Luke vi. 48. Many a stroke must be given at the root of the tree of the natural pride of the heart ere it fall; oft-times it seems to be fallen, and yet it arises again. And, even when the root-stroke is given in believers, the rod of pride buds again, so that there is still occasion for new humbling work.

(3.) The whole time of this life is appointed for humiliation. This was signified by the forty years the Israelites had in the wilderness, Deut. viii. 2. It was so to Christ, and therefore it must be so to men, Heb. xii. 2. And in that time they must either be formed according to his image, or else appear as reprobate silver that will not take it on by any means, Rom. viii. 29. So that whatever lifting up men may now and then get in this life, the habitual course of it will still be humbling.

(4.) There is no humbling after this, Rev. xxii. 11. If the pride of the heart be not brought down in this life, it will never be; no kindly humiliation is to be expected in the other life. There the proud will be broken in pieces, but not softened; their lot and condition will be brought to the lowest pass, but the unhumbleness of their spirits will still remain, whence they will be in eternal agonies, through the opposition betwixt their spirits and lot, Rev. xvi. 21.

Wherefore, beware lest ye sit your time of humiliation: humbled we must be, or we are gone for ever; and this is the time, the only time of it; therefore, make your hay while the sun shines; strike in with humbling providences, and fight not against them while ye have them, Acts xiii. 41. The season of grace will not last; if ye sleep in seed-time, ye will beg in harvest.

5. This is the way to turn humbling circumstances to a good account; so that instead of being losers, ye would be gainers by them, Psalm cxix. 71. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." Would ye gather grapes of these thorns and thistles, set yourselves to get your spirits humbled by them.

(1.) Humiliation of spirit is a most *valuable* thing in itself, Prov. xvi. 32. It cannot be bought too dear. Whatever one is made to suffer, if his spirit is thereby duly brought down, he has what is well worth bearing all the hardship for, 1 Pet. iii. 4.

(2.) Humility of spirit brings many *advantages* along with it. It is a fruitful bough, well laden, wherever it is. It contributes to one's ease under the cross, Matt. xi. 30. Lam. iii. 27, 28, 29. It is a sacrifice particularly acceptable to God, Psalm li. 17. The eye of God is particularly on such for good, Isa. lxvi. 2. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." Yea, he dwells with them, Isa. lvii. 15. And it carries a line of wisdom through one's whole conduct, Prov. xi. 2. "With the lowly is wisdom."

Lastly, Consider it as a mighty hand that is at work with us; the hand of the mighty God; let us then bend our spirits towards a compliance with it, and not wrestle against it. Consider,

(1.) We must fall *under* it. Since the design of it is to bring us down, we cannot stand before it; for it cannot miscarry in its designs, Isa. xlvi. 10. "My counsel shall stand." So, fall before it we must, either in the way of duty or judgment, Psal. xlv. 5. "Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies, whereby the people fall under thee."

(2.) They that are so wise as to fall in humiliation under the mighty hand, be they ever so low, the same hand will *raise* them up again, James iv. 10. In a word, be the proud ever so high, God will bring them down: be the humble ever so low, God will raise them up.

Directions for reaching this humiliation.

I. General Directions.

Direct. 1. Fix it in your heart to seek some spiritual improvement of the conduct of Providence towards you, Micah vi. 9. Till once your heart get a set that way, your humiliation is not to be expected. Hosea xiv. 9. But nothing is more reasonable, if we would act either like men or Christians, than to aim at turning what is so grievous to the flesh unto the profit of the spirit; that, if we are losers at one hand, we may be gainers at another.

2. Settle the matter of your eternal salvation, in the first place, by betaking yourself to Christ, and taking God for your God in him, according to the gospel-offer, Hosea ii. 19. Heb. viii. 10. Let your humbling circumstances move you to this, that while the creature dries up, you may go to the Fountain: for it is impossible to reach due humiliation under the mighty hand, without faith in him as your God and friend, Heb. xi. 6. 1 John iv. 19.

3. Use the means of soul-humbling in the faith of the promise, Psalm xxviii. 7. Moses smiting the rock in faith of the promise, made water gush out, which otherwise would not at all appeared. Let us do likewise in dealing with our rocky

hearts. They must be laid on the soft bed of the gospel, and struck there, as Joel ii. 13. "Turn to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful:" or they will never kindly break or fall in humiliation.

II. Particular Directions.

1. Assure yourselves that there are no circumstances so humbling that you are in, but you may get your heart acceptably brought *down* to them. 1 Cor. x. 13. "But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." This is truth, 1 Cor. xii. 9. "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." And you would be persuaded of it, with application to yourselves, if ever you would reach the end. Phil. iv. 13. "I can do all things thro' Christ which strengtheneth me." God allows you to be persuaded of it, whatever is your weakness and the difficulty of the task. "For your sakes this is written, that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope, should be partaker of his hope," 1 Cor. ix. 10. And the belief thereof is a piece of the life of faith, 2 Tim. ii. 1. If you have no hope of success, your endeavours, as they will be heartless, so they will be vain. "Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees," Heb. xii. 12.

2. Whatever hand is, or is not, in your humbling circumstances, do you take *God* for your party, and consider yourselves therein as under his mighty hand, Micah vi. 9. Men in their humbling

circumstances overlook God; so they find not themselves called to humility under them; they fix their eyes on the creature instrument, and, instead of humility, their hearts rise. But take him for your party, that ye may remember the battle, and do no more, Job xli. 3.

3. Be much in the thoughts of God's infinite greatness: consider his holiness and majesty, fit to awe you into deepest humiliation, Isa. vi. 3, 4, 5. Job met with many humbling providences in his case, but he was never sufficiently humbled under them, till the Lord made a new discovery of himself unto him, in his infinite majesty and greatness. He kept his ground against his friends, and stood to his points, till the Lord took that method with him. It was begun with thunder, Job xxxvii. 1, 2. Then followed God's voice out of the whirlwind, chap. xxxviii. 1. whereon Job is brought down, chap. xl. 4, 5. It is renewed till he is farther humbled, chap. xlii. 5, 6. "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

4. Inure yourselves silently to admit *mysterics* in the conduct of Providence towards you, which you are not able to comprehend, but will adore, Rom. xi. 33. "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" That was the first word God said to Job, xxxviii. 2. "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" It took him by the heart, stuck with him, and he comes over it again, chap. xlii. 3. as that which particularly brought him to his knees, to the dust. Even in those steps of Providence, which we seem to see far into, we may well allow there are some mysteries beyond what we see. And in those which

are perplexing and puzzling, sovereignty should silence us; his infinite wisdom should satisfy, tho we cannot see.

5. Be much in the thoughts of your own *sinfulness*, Job xl. 4. "Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth." It is overlooking of that which gives us so much ado with humbling circumstances. While the eyes are held that they cannot see sin, the heart riseth against them; but when they are opened, it falls. Wherefore, whenever God is dealing with you in humbling dispensations, turn your eyes, upon that occasion, on the sinfulness of our nature, heart, and life, and that will help forward your humiliation.

6. Settle it in your heart, that there is *need* of all the humbling circumstances you are put in. This is truth, 1 Pet. i. 6. "Though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." God brings no needless trials upon us, afflicts none but as their need requires, Lam. iii. 33. "For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." That is an observable difference betwixt our earthly and heavenly Father's correction, Heb. xii. 10. "They, after their own pleasure; but HE for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." Look to the temper of your own hearts and nature, how apt to be lift up, forget God, carried away with the vanities of the world; what foolishness is bound up in your heart. Thus you will see the need of humbling circumstances for ballast, and of the rod for the fool's back; and if at any time you cannot see that need, believe it on the ground of God's infinite wisdom, that does nothing in vain.

7. Believe a kind *design* of Providence in them towards you. God calls us to this, as the key that opens the heart under them, Rev. iii. 19. Satan suggests suspicions to the contrary, as the bar which may hold it shut, 2 Kings vi. 33. "This evil is of the Lord, what should I wait for the Lord any longer?" As long as the suspicions of an ill design in them against us reigns, the creature will, like the worm at the man's feet, put itself in the best posture of defence it can, and harden itself in sorrow: but the faith of a kind design will cause it open out itself in humility before him.

Case. 'O! If I knew there were a kind design in it, I would willingly bear it, although there were more of it; but I fear a ruining design of Providence against me therein.'

Ans. Now, what word of God, or discovery from heaven, have you to ground these fears upon? None at all, but from hell, 1 Cor. x. 13. What think you the design towards you in the gospel is? Can you believe no kind design towards you in all the words of grace there heaped up neither? What is that, I pray, but black unbelief in its hue of hell, Isa. lv. 1. flying in the face of the truth of God; and making him a liar, 1 John v. 10, 11. The gospel is a breathing of love and good will to the world of mankind sinners, Tit. ii. 11. iii. 4. 1 John iv. 14. John iii. 17. But ye believe it not, in that case, more than devils believe it. But if ye can believe a kind design there, ye must believe it in your humbling circumstances too; for the design of Providence cannot be contrary to the design of the gospel; but contrarywise the latter is to help forward to the other.

8. Think with yourselves, that this life is the time of *trial* for heaven, James i. 12. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." And therefore there should be a welcoming of humbling circumstances on that view, ver. 2. "Count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations." If there is an honourable office, or beneficial employment to be bestowed, men strive to be taken on trials for it, in hope they may be thereupon legally admitted to it. Now God takes trial of men for heaven by humbling circumstances, as the whole Bible teacheth; and shall men be so very loth to stoop to them? I would ask you,

(1.) Is it nothing to you to stand a candidate for glory, to be put on trials for heaven? Is there not an honour in it, an honour which all the saints have had? Jam. v. 11. "Behold we count them happy that endure," &c. And a fair prospect in it, 2 Cor. iv. 17. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Do but put the case, God should overlook you in that case, as one whom it is needless ever to try on that head; that he should order your portion in this life with full ease, as one that is to get no more of him; what would that be?

(2.) What a vast disproportion is there between your trials and the glory? Your most humbling circumstances, how light are they in comparison of the weight of it? The longest continued of them are but for a moment, compared with the eternal weight. Alas! there is much unbelief at the root of all our uneasiness under our humbling circum-

stances. Had we a clearer view of the other world, we would not make so much of either the smiles or frowns of this.

(3.) What think ye of coming foul off the trial of your humbling circumstances? Jer. vi. 29, 30. "The lead is consumed of the fire; the founder melteth in vain; for the wicked are not plucked away. Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them." That the issue of it be only, that your heart appear of such a temper as by no means to be humbled; and that therefore you must and shall be taken off them, while yet no humbling appears. I think the awfulness of the dispensation is such, as might set us to our knees to deprecate the lifting us up from our humbling circumstances, ere our hearts are humbled, Isa. i. 5. Ezek. xxiv. 13.

9. Think with yourselves, how it is by humbling circumstances the Lord *prepares* us for heaven, Col. i. 12. *Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*, with 2 Cor. v. 5. The stones and timber are laid down, turned over and over, and hewed, ere they be set up in the building; and not just set up as they come out of the quarry and wood. Were they capable of a choice, such of them as would refuse the iron tool would be refused a place in the building. Pray, how think ye to be made meet for heaven, by the warm sunshine of this world's ease, and getting all your will here? Nay, Sirs, that would put your mouth out of taste for the joys of the other world. Vessels of dishonour are fitted for destruction that way; but vessels of honour for glory by humbling circumstances. I would here say,

(1.) Will nothing please you but *two* heavens, one here, another hereafter? God has secured one heaven for the saints, one place, where they shall get all their will, wish, and desire; where there shall be no weight on them to hold them down; and that is in the other world. But ye must have it both here and there, or ye cannot digest it. Why do ye not quarrel too that there are not two summers in one year; two days in twenty-four hours? The order of the one heaven is as firm as that of the years and days, and ye will not reverse it: therefore, chuse ye whether you will take your night or your day first, your winter or your summer, your heaven here or hereafter.

(2.) Without being humbled with humbling circumstances in this life, ye are not *capable* of heaven, 2 Cor. v. 5. "Now, he that hath wrought "us for the self-same thing is God." Ye may indeed lie at ease here in a bed of sloth, and dream of heaven, big with hopes of a fool's paradise, wishing to cast yourselves just out of Delilah's lap in Abraham's bosom; but without ye be humbled ye are not capable.

(1.) Of the *Bible*-heaven, that heaven described in the Old and New Testament. Is not that heaven a lifting up in due time? But, how shall ye be lifted up that are never well got down? Where will your tears be to be wiped away? What place will there be for your triumph, that will not fight the good fight? How can it be a rest to you, who cannot away with labour?

(2.) Of the *saints'* heaven, Rev. vii. 14. "And "he said unto me, These are they which came out "of great tribulation, and have washed their robes "and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." This answers the question anent Abraham, Isaac

and Jacob, and all the saints with them there : they were brought down to the dust with humbling circumstances, and out of these they came to before the throne. How can ye ever think to be lifted up with them, with whom ye cannot think to be brought down?

(3.) Of *Christ's* heaven, Heb. xii. 2. "Who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God." O! consider how the Forerunner made his way, Luke xxiv. 26. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" And lay your accounts with it, that if ye get where he is, ye must go thither as he went, Luke ix. 23. "And he said, If any will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

10. Give up at length with your towering *hopes* from this world, and confine them to the world to come. Be as pilgrims and strangers here, looking for your rest in heaven, and not till ye come there. There is a prevailing evil, Isa. lvii. 10. "Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way: yet saidst thou not, There is no hope." So the Babel-building is still continued, though it has fallen down again and again: For men say, "The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones; the sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars," Isa. ix. 10. This makes humbling work very longsome; we are so hard to quit the grip of the creature, to fall off from the breast and be weaned.—But fasten your grips on the other world, and let your grip of this go; so shall ye "be humbled indeed under the mighty

“hand.” The faster you grip the happiness of that world, the easier will it be to accomodate yourselves to your humbling circumstances here.

11. Make use of *Christ* in all his offices, for your humiliation, under your humbling circumstances. That only is kindly humiliation that comes in that way. Zech. xii. 10. “And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn,” &c. That you must do by trusting on him for that effect,

(1.) As a *Priest* for you. You have a conscience full of guilt, and that will make one uneasy in any circumstances, and far more in humbling circumstances; it will be like a thorn in the shoulder on which a burden is laid. But the blood of Christ will purge the conscience, draw out the thorn, give ease, Isa. xxxiii. 24. and fit for service, doing or suffering, Heb. ix. 14. “How much more shall the blood of Christ—purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

(2.) As your *Prophet* to teach you. We have need to be taught rightly to discern our humbling circumstances; for, often we mistake them so far, that they prove an oppressing load; whereas, could we rightly see them, just as God sets them to us, they would be humbling, but not so oppressive. Truly we need Christ, and the light of his word and Spirit, to let us see our cross and trial as well as our duty, Psal. xxv. 9, 10.

(3.) As your *King*. You have a stiff heart, loth to bow even in humbling circumstances; take a lesson from Moses what to do in such a case, Exod. xxxiv. 9. *And he said,—Let my Lord, I pray thee, go amongst us (for it is a stiff-necked people,) and pardon our iniquity, and our sin.* Put it in his hands that is strong and mighty, Psalm xxiv. 8. He is a

ble to cause it to melt, and like wax, before the fire, turn to the seal.

Think on these *directions*, in order to put them in practice, remembering, that if ye *know these things, happy are ye, if ye do them*. Remember humbling work is a work that will fill your hand, while you live here, and that you cannot come to the end of till death; and humbling circumstances will attend you, while you are in this lower world. A change of them ye may get; but a freedom from them ye cannot, till ye come to heaven. So the humbling circumstances of our imperfections, relations, contradictions, afflictions, uncertainties and sinfulness, will afford matter of exercise to us while here. — What remains of the purpose of this text, I shall comprise in,

DOCT. II. *There is a due time, wherein those that now humble themselves under the mighty hand of God will certainly be lifted up.* We shall take,

I. A *general view* of this point. And consider, 1st, Some things *supposed* and *implied* in it. It bears,

1. That those who shall share of this lifting up, must lay their accounts, in the first place, with a *casting down*, Rev. vii. 14. John xvi. 33.—“In the world ye shall have tribulation.” There is no coming to the promised land, according to the settled method of grace, but through the wilderness; nor entering into this exaltation, but through a strait gate. If we cannot away with casting down, we will not taste of the sweet of the lifting up.

2. Being cast down by the mighty hand of God, we must learn to *lie still* and *quiet* under it, till the

same hand that cast us down raise us up, if we would share of this promised lifting up, Lam. iii. 27. It is not the being cast into humbling circumstances, by the providence of God, but the coming down of our spirits under them, by the grace of God, that brings us within the compass of this promise.

3. Never humbled, in humbling circumstances, *never lifted up* in the way of this promise. Men may keep their spirits on the high bend in their humbling circumstances, and in that case may get a lifting up. Prov. xvi. 19. But note this, what they get will be a lifting up, to the end that they may get the more grievous fall. "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places, thou castedst them down in a moment," Psalm lxxiii. 18. But they who will not humble themselves in humbling circumstances, will find their obstinacy a need nail, that will keep their misery ever fast on them without remedy.

4. Humility of spirit, in humbling circumstances, ascertains a *lifting up out of them* some time, with the good will and favour of heaven. Luke xviii. 14. "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Solomon observes, Prov. xv. 1. that "a soft answer turneth away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger." And so it is, that while the proud, through their obstinacy, do but wreathe the yoke faster about their own necks, the yielding humble ones, by their yielding, make their relief sure. 1 Sam. ii. 8, 9, 10. "He raiseth the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory. He will keep the feet of his

“saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness ;
 “for by strength shall no man prevail. The ad-
 “versaries of the Lord shall be broken in pieces.”
 So the cannon-ball breaks down a stone wall,
 while the yielding packs of wool take away its
 force.

5. There is an *appointed time* for the lifting up of those that humble themselves in their humbling circumstances. Hab. ii. 3. “For the vision is yet
 “for an appointed time, but at the end it shall
 “speak and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it ;
 “because it will surely come, it will not tarry.”
 To every thing there is a time, as for humbling, so
 for lifting up, Eccl. iii. 3. We know it not, but
 God knows it, who hath appointed it. Let not the
 humble one say, I will never be lifted up ; there is
 a time fixt for it, as precisely as for the rising of
 the sun, after the long and dark night, or the re-
 turn of the spring after the long and sharp winter.

6. It is not to be expected, that immediately
 upon *one's humbling himself*, the *lifting up* is to
 follow. No ; one is not only to lie down under the
 mighty hand, but lie still waiting the due time ;
 humbling work is longsome work ; the Israelites
 had forty years of it in the wilderness. God's peo-
 ple must be brought to put a blank in his hand, as
 to the time ; and while they have a long night of
 walking in darkness, must trust, Isa l. 10. “Who
 “is among you that feareth the Lord, that obey-
 “eth the voice of his servant, that walketh in
 “darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in
 “the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.”

7. The appointed time for the lifting up is the
due time, the time fittest for it, wherein it will come
 most seasonably. “And let us not be weary in well
 “doing ; for, in due season we shall reap, if we

“faint not,” Gal. vi. 9. For that is the time God has chosen for it; and be sure his choice, as the choice of infinite wisdom, is the best: and therefore faith sets to wait it. Isa. xxviii. 16, “He that believeth shall not make haste.” There is much of the beauty of a thing depends on the timing of it, and he has fixed that in all that he does, Eccl. iii. 11. “He hath made every thing beautiful in his time.”

8. The lifting up of the humble will not *miss* to come in the appointed and due time, Hab. ii. 3. Time makes no halting; in its running day and night; so the due time is fast coming, and, when it comes, it will bring the lifting up along with it. Let the humbling circumstances be ever so low, ever so hopeless, it is impossible but the lifting up from them must come in the due time.

II. A word, in the general, to the *lifting up*, abiding those that *humble* themselves. There is a two-fold lifting up.

1. A *partial* lifting up, competent to the humbled in time, during this life. Psal. xxx. 1. “I will extol thee, O Lord, for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.” This is a lifting up in part, and but in part, not wholly; and such liftings up the humbled may expect, while in this world but no more.—These give a breathing to the weary, a change of burdens, but do not set them at perfect ease. So Israel, in the wilderness, in the midst of their many mourning times, had some singing ones, Exod. xv. i. Num. xxi. 17.

2. A *total* lifting up, competent to them at the end of time, at death. Luke xvi. 22. “It came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried, by the angels, into Abraham’s bosom.” Then the Lord deals with them no more by parcels and halves, but

carries them relief to perfection, Heb. xii. 23. Then he takes off all their burdens, eases them of all their weights, and lays no more on for ever. He then lifts them up to a height they were never at before; no, not even at their highest. He sets them quite above all that is low, and therein fixes them, never to be brought down more. Now, there is a due time for both these.

(1.) For the *partial* lifting up. Every time is not fit for it; we are not always fit to receive comfort, an ease or a change of our burdens. God sees there are times wherein it is needful for his people to be "in heaviness," 1 Pet. i. 6. to have their "hearts brought down with grief," Psal. cvii. 12. But then there is a time really appointed for it in the divine wisdom, when he will think it as needful to comfort them, as before to bring down, 2 Cor. ii. 7. 'So that, contraryways, ye ought rather to forgive, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with over much sorrow.' We are, in that case, in the hand of God, as in the hand of our physician, who appoints the time the drawing plaster shall be applied, and leaves it not to the patient.

(2.) For the *total* lifting up. When we are sore oppressed with our burdens, we are ready to think, O to be away, and set beyond them all, Job vii. 2, 3. "As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow, and as a hireling looketh for the reward of his work; so am I made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me." But it may be fitter, for all that, that we stay a while, and wrestle with our burdens, Phil. i. 24, 25. "Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all, for

“your furtherance and joy of faith.” A few days might have taken Israel out of Egypt into Canaan; but they would have been over-soon there if they had made all that speed; so they behoved to spend forty years in the wilderness, till their due time of entering Canaan should come. And be sure the saints, entering heaven, will be convinced, that the time of it is best chosen, and there will be a beauty in that it was not sooner. And thus a lifting up is secured for the humble.

III. The *certainty* of the lifting up of those that humble themselves under humbling circumstances. If one would assure you, when reduced to poverty, that the time should certainly come yet, that ye should be rich; when sore sick, that ye should not die of that disease, but certainly recover,—that would help you to bear your poverty and sickness the better, and you would comfort yourselves with that prospect. However, one may continue poor, and never be rich, may be sick, and die of his disease; but, whoever humble themselves under their humbling circumstances, we can assure them from the Lord’s word they shall certainly, without all peradventure, be lifted up out of, and relieved from, their humbling circumstances: they shall certainly see the day of their ease and relief, when they shall remember their burdens as waters that fail. And ye may be assured thereof from the following considerations.

1. The *nature* of God, duly considered, ensures it, Psalm ciii. 8, 9. “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide; neither will he keep his anger for ever.” The humbled soul, looking to God in Christ, may see three things in his nature jointly securing it.

(1.) Infinite *power*, that can do all things. No circumstances are so low, but he can raise them; so intangling and perplexed, but he can unravel them; so hopeless, but he can remedy them, Gen. xviii. 14. "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" Be our case what it will, it is never past reach with him to help it; but then is the most proper season for him to take it in hand, when all others have given it over, Deut. xxxii. 36. "For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants; when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left."

(2.) Infinite *goodness* inclining to help. He is good and gracious in his nature, Exod. xxxiv. 6—9. And therefore his power is a spirit of comfort to them, Rom. xiv. 4. Men may be willing that are not able, or able that are not willing; but infinite goodness, joining infinite power in God, may ascertain the humbled of a lifting up in due time. That is a word of inconceivable sweetness, 1 John iv. 16. "And we know and believe the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." He has the bowels of a father towards the humble, Psalm ciii. 13. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Yea, bowels of mercy more tender than a mother to her sucking child, Isa. xlix. 15. Wherefore, howbeit his wisdom may see it necessary to put them in humbling circumstances, and keep them in them for a time, it is not possible he can leave them in them for altogether.

(3.) Infinite *wisdom*, that doth nothing in vain, and therefore will not needlessly keep one in hum-

bling circumstances, Lam. iii. 32, 33. " But
 " though he cause grief, yet he will have compas-
 " sion, according to the multitude of his mercies;
 " for he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the
 " children of men." God sends them on for hum-
 bling as the end and design to be brought about by
 them; when that is obtained, and there is no more
 use for them that way, we may assure ourselves
 they will be taken off.

2. The *providence* of God, viewed in its stated
 method of procedure with its objects, ensures it.
 Turn your eyes which way you will on the divine
 providence, ye may conclude thence, that in due
 time the humble will be lifted up.

(1.) Observe the providence of God, in the re-
 volutions of the whole course of nature, day suc-
 ceeding to the longest night, a summer to the win-
 ter, a waxing to a waning of the moon, a flowing
 to an ebbing of the sea, &c. Let not the Lord's
 humbled ones be idle spectators of these things;
 they are for our learning, Jer. xxxii. 35, 36, 37.
 " Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a
 " light by day, and the ordinances of the moon,
 " and of the stars for a light by night, which di-
 " videth the sea, when the waters thereof roar;
 " the Lord of Hosts is his name. If these ordi-
 " nances depart from before me, saith the Lord,
 " then the seed of Israel shall cease from being a
 " nation before me for ever." Will the Lord's
 hand keep such a steady course in the earth, sea,
 and visible heavens, as to bring a lifting up in
 them after a casting down, and only forget his
 humbled ones? No, by no means.

(2.) Observe the providence of God, in the dis-
 pensations thereof, about the man CHRIST, the
 most noble and august object thereof, more valua-

ble than a thousand worlds, Col. ii. 9. Did not Providence keep this course with him, first humbling him, then exalting him, and lifting him up? first bringing him to the dust of death, in a course of sufferings thirty-three-years, then exalt him to the Father's right-hand in the eternity of glory? Heb. xii. 2 — "Who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Phil. ii. 8, 9. "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross: Wherefore God hath also highly exalted him." The exaltation could not fail to follow his humiliation. Luke xxiv. 26. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" And he saw and believed it would follow, as the springing of the seed doth the sowing it, John xii. 24. There is a near concern the humbled in humbling circumstances have herein.

(1.) This is the pattern Providence copies after in its conduct towards you. The Father was so well pleased with this method, in the case of his own Son, that it was determined to be followed, and just copied over again in the case of all the heirs of glory. Rom. viii. 29. "For whom he did foreknow; he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brethren." And who would not be pleased to walk through the dark valley treading his steps?

(2.) This is a sure pledge of our lifting up. Christ, in his state of humiliation, was considered as a public Person and Representative, and so is he in his exaltation. So Christ's exaltation ensures your exaltation out of your humbling circumstan-

ces. Isa. xxvi. 19. "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise; awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust." Hos. vi. 1, 2. "Come and let us return unto the Lord; for he hath torn and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us; in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." Eph. ii. 6. "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Yea, he is gone into the state of glory for us as our forerunner. Heb. vi. 20. "Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an High Priest for ever."

(3.) His humiliation was the price of your exaltation, and his exaltation a full testimony of the acceptance of its payment to the full. There are no humbling circumstances ye are in, but ye would have perished in them, had not he purchased your lifting up out of them by his own humiliation, Isa. xxvi. 19. — Now, his humbling grace in you is an evidence of the acceptance of his humiliation for your lifting up.

3. Observe the *providence* of God towards the *church* in all ages. This has been the course the Lord has kept with her, Psal. cxxix. 1—4. Abel was slain by the wicked Cain, to the great grief of Adam and Eve, and the rest of their pious children: but then there was another seed raised up in Abel's room after, Gen. iv. 25. Noah and his sons were buried alive in the ark more than a year; but then they were brought out into a new world and blessed. Abraham for many years went childless; but at length Isaac was born. Israel was long in miserable bondage in Egypt; but at length seated in the promised land, &c. We must be content

to go by the footsteps of the flock ; and if in humiliation, we will surely follow them in exaltation too.

4. Observe the providence of God in the dispensation of his *grace* towards his children. The general rule is, 1 Pet. v. 5. "For God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." How are they brought into a state of grace? Is it not by a sound work of humiliation going before? Luke vi. 48. And ordinarily the greater measure of grace is designed for one, the deeper is their humiliation before, as in Paul's case. If they are to be recovered out of a back-slidden case, the same method is followed: so that deepest humiliation ordinarily makes way for the greatest comforts, and the darkest hour goes before the rising of the Sun of Righteousness upon them, Isa. lxvi. 5,—13.

5. Observe the providence of God at length throwing down *wicked* men, however long they stand and prosper. Psalm xxxvii. 35, 36. "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree; yet he passed away, and lo he was not; yea, I sought him but he could not be found." They are long green before the sun, but at length they are suddenly smitten with an east wind, and wither away; their lamp goes out with a stink, and they are put out in obscure darkness. Now, it is inconsistent with the benignity of the divine nature, to forget the humble to raise them, while he minds the proud to abase them.

The *word* of God puts it beyond all peradventure, which, from the beginning to the end, is the humbled saint's security for lifting up. Psalm

cxix. 49, 50. "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. "This is my comfort in my affliction; for thy word hath quickened me." His word is the great letter of his name, which he will certainly see to cause to shine. Psalm cxxxviii. 2. "For thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name;" and in all generations has been safely listened to, Psalm xii. 6. Consider,

(1.) The *doctrines* of the word, which teach faith and hope for the time, and the happy issue the exercises of these graces will have. The whole current of scripture, to those in humbling circumstances is, "Not to cast away their confidence, but to hope to the end; and that for this good reason, that it shall not be in vain." See Psalm xxvii. 14. "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; Wait I say, on the Lord."—And compare, Rom. ix. 33. Isa. xlix. 23. "For they shall not be ashamed that wait for me."

(2.) The *promises* of the word, whereby heaven is expressly engaged for a lifting up to those that humble themselves in humbling circumstances. James iv. 10. "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." Matt. xxiii. 12. "And he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." It may take a time to prepare them for lifting up, but that being done, it is secured. Psalm x. 17. "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble; thou wilt prepare their heart; thou wilt cause thine ear to hear." They have his word for deliverance, Psalm l. 15. And though they may seem to be forgotten, they shall not be always so; the time of their deliverance will come. Psalm ix. 18. "For the needy shall not always

“be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall
“not perish for ever.” Psalm cii. 17. “He will
“regard the prayer of the destitute, and not des-
“pise their prayer.”

(3.) The *examples* of the word sufficiently con-
firming the truth of the doctrines and promises.
Rom. xv. 4. “For whatsoever things were writ-
“ten afore time, were written for our learning;
“that we through patience and comfort of the
“scriptures might have hope.” In the doctrines
and promises the lifting up is proposed to our faith,
to be reckoned on the credit of God’s word; but,
in the examples it is, in the case of others, set be-
fore our eyes to be seen. Jam. v. 11. “Behold
“we count them happy which endure. Ye have
“heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the
“end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful,
“and of tender mercy.” There we see it in the
case of Abraham, Job, David, Paul, and other
saints; but above all, in the case of the man
Christ.

4. The *intercession* of Christ, joining the pray-
ers and cries of his humbled people, in their hum-
bling circumstances, ensures a lifting up for them
at length. Be it so, that the proud cry not when
he bindeth them; yet his own humbled ones will
not do so, they will cry. Psalm xlii. 7, 8. “Deep
“calleth unto deep, at the noise of thy water-
“spouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone
“over me. Yet the Lord will command his loving
“kindness in the day-time, and in the night his
“song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the
“God of my life.” And though unbelievers may
soon be outwearied, and give it over for altogeth-
er, sure believers will not do so; but though they
may, in a fit of temptation, lay it by as hopeless,

they will find themselves obliged to take it up again. Jer. xx. 9. "Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name." But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay;" and continue to cry on night and day, Luke xviii. 7. knowing no time for giving it over till they be lifted up. Lam. iii. 49, 50. "Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission; till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven." Now, Christ's intercession being joined with these cries, there cannot miss to be a lifting up — Consider,

1. Christ's intercession is certainly joined with the *cries* and *prayers* of the humbled in their humbling circumstances. Rev. viii. 3. "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, which was before the throne." They are by the Spirit helped to groan for relief, Rom. viii. 26. and the prayers and groans, which are through the Spirit, are certainly to be made effectual by the intercession of the Son, Jam. v. 16. And ye may know they are by the Spirit, if so be ye are helped to continue praying, hoping for your suit on the ground of God's word of promise; for nature's praying is a pool that will dry up in a long drought. It is the Spirit of prayer is the lasting spring, John iv. 14. Psalm cxxxviii. 3. "In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me; and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." Truly there is an intercession in heaven, on account of the humbling circumstances of the humble ones. "Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of

“hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on
 “Jerusalem, and on the cities of Judah, against
 “which thou hast had indignation these three-score
 “and ten years?” Zech. i. 12. How then can they
 miss of a lifting up in due time?

2. He is in deepest *earnest* in his intercession for his people in their humbling circumstances. Some will speak a good word in favour of the helpless, that will be little concerned whether they come speed or not; but our Intercessor is in earnest in behalf of his humbled ones: for he is touched with sympathy in their case, Isa. lxiii. 9. “In all their
 “afflictions he was afflicted.”—A most tender sympathy, Zech. ii. 8. “For he that toucheth you,
 “toucheth the apple of his eye.” He has their case upon his heart, where he is, in the holy place, in the highest heavens, Exod. xxviii. 29 and he keeps exact account of the time of their humbling circumstances, be it as long as it will, Zech. i. 12. Moreover, it is his own business; the lifting up they are to have is a thing that is secured to him, in the promises made to him on the account of his blood shed for them, Psalm lxxxix. 33, 36. So not only are they looking on earth, but the Man Christ is in heaven looking for the accomplishment of these promises, Heb. x. 12, 13. “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice
 “for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of
 “God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies
 “be made his footstool.” How is it possible, then, that looking should be baulked? Moreover, these humbling circumstances are his own sufferings still, though not in his Person, yet in his members, Col. i. 24. “Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you,
 “and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of
 “Christ in my flesh, for his body’s sake, which is

“the church.” Wherefore there is all ground to conclude he is in deep earnest.

(3.) His intercession is always *effectual*, John xi. 42. “And I know that thou hearest me always.” It cannot miss to be so, because he is the Father’s well beloved Son; his intercession has a plea of justice for the ground of it, 1 John ii. 1. “We have “an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the “righteous.” Moreover, he has all power in heaven and earth lodged in him, 1 John v. 22. And, finally, he and his Father are one, and their will one. So, for the present time, both Christ and his Father do will the lifting up of the humble ones, but yet only in due time.

Secondly, I proceed to a more *particular view* of the point. And,

1st. We will consider the lifting up as brought about in *time*, which is the partial lifting up. And,

(1.) Some considerations for clearing the *nature* thereof.

1. This lifting up does not take place in *every case* of a child of God. One may be humbled in humbling circumstances, from which he is to get a lifting up in time. We would from the promise presently conclude, that we being humbled under our humbling circumstances, shall certainly be taken out of them, and freed from them ere we get to the end of our journey. For it is certain, there are some, such as our imperfections, and sinfulness, and mortality, we can by no means be rid of while in this world. And there are particular humbling circumstances the Lord may hang about one, and keep about them, till they go down to the grave, while, in the mean time, he may lift up another from the same. Heman was pressed down all along from his *youth*. Psal. lxxxviii. 15. others all their *life time*, Heb. ii. 15.

Object. 'If that be the case, what comes of the promise of lifting up? Where is the lifting up, if one may get to the grave under the weight?'

Answ. Were there no life after this, there would be weight in that objection; but since there is another life, there is none in it at all. In the other life the promise will be accomplishing to the humbled as it was, Luke xvi. 22. Consider that the great term for accomplishing the promises, is the other life, not this. "These all died in the faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them," Heb. xi. 13. And that whatever accomplishment of the promise is here, it is not the nature of the stock, but of a sample or a pledge.

Quest. 'But then, may we not give over praying for the lifting up, in that case?'

Answ. We do not know when that is our case; for a case may be past all hope in our eyes, and the eyes of others, in which God designs a lifting up in time, as in Job's, chap. vi. 11. "What is my strength that I should hope? And what is mine end that I should prolong my life?" But, be it as it will, we should never give over praying for the lifting up, since it will certainly come to all that pray in faith for it; if not here, yet hereafter. The promise is sure, and that is the commandment; so such praying cannot miss of a happy issue at length, Psalm l. 15. "And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." The whole life of a Christian is such a praying-waiting life to encourage whereunto all temporal deliverances are given as pledges, Rom. viii. 23. "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the spirit; even we ourselves groan

“within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, viz. the redemption of our body.” And whoso observes that full lifting up at death to be at hand, must certainly rise, if he has given over his case as hopeless.

2. However, there are some cases wherein this lifting up does take place. God gives his people some notable liftings up, even in time raising them out of remarkable humbling circumstances. The storm is changed into a calm, and they remember it as waters that fail, Psalm xl. 1—4. Two things may be observed on this.

(1.) One may be in humbling circumstances very long, and sore, and hopeless, and yet a lifting up may be abiding them, of a much longer continuance. This is sometimes the case of the children of God, who are set to bear the yoke in their youth, as it was with Joseph and David; and of them that get it laid on them in their middle age, as it was with Job, who could not be less than forty at his trouble's coming, but after it lived one hundred and forty, Job xlii. 16. God by such methods prepares men for peculiar usefulness.

(2.) One may be in humbling circumstances long and sore, and quite hopeless, in the ordinary course of providence, yet they may get a clear and warm blink of a lifting up, ere they come to their journey's end. The life of some of God's children is like a cloudy and rainy day, wherein, in the evening, the sun breaks out from under the clouds, shines fair and clear a little and then sets. “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark. But it shall come to pass, that at evening-time it shall be light.” Zech. xiv. 6, 7. Such was the case of Jacob in his old age, brought in honour and comfort into Egypt unto his son, and then died.

(3.) Yet whatever liftings up they get in this life, they will never want some weights hanging about them for their humbling. They may have their singing times, but their songs while in this world will be mixed with groanings, 2 Cor. v. 4. "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened." The unmixt dispensation is reserved for the other world; but this will be a wilderness unto the end, where there will be howlings with the most joyful notes.

Lastly, All the liftings up the humbled meet with now are pledges, and but pledges, samples, and arle-pennies, [*earnest*] of the great lifting up, abiding them on the other side; and they should look on them so.

(1.) They are really so, Hos. ii. 15. "And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Acher for a door of hope; and she shall sing there as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came out of the land of Egypt." Our Lord Jesus is leading his people now through the wilderness, and the manna and water of the rock are earnest for the time of the milk and honey flowing in the promised land.—They are not yet come home to their Father's house, but they are travelling on the road, and Christ their elder Brother with them, Song iv. 8. who bears their expences, takes them into inns by the way, as it were, and refreshes them with partial liftings up; after which, they must get to the road again. But that entertainment by the way is a pledge of the full entertainment he will afford them when come home.

Object. 'But people may get a lifting up in time, that yet is no pledge of a lifting up on the other side: How shall I know it then to be a pledge?'

Ans. That lifting up, which comes by the promises, is certainly a pledge of the full lifting up in the other world; for, as the other life is the proper time of the accomplishing of the promises, so we may be sure, that when God once begins to clear his bond, he will certainly hold on till it is fully cleared. "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me," Psalm cxxxviii. 8. So we may say as Naomi to Ruth, upon her receiving the six measures of barley from Boaz, Ruth iii. 18. "He will not be in rest until he have finished the thing this day." There are liftings up that come by common providence, and these indeed are single, and not pledges of more; but the promise chains mercies together, so that one got is a pledge of another to come, yea, of the whole chain to the end, 2 Sam. v. 12.

Quest. 'But how shall I know the lifting up to come by the way of the promise?'

Ans. That which comes by the way of the promise, does at once come the low way of humiliation, the high way of faith, or believing the promise, and the long way of waiting hope, and patient continuance, James v. 7. "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it until he receive the early and latter rain." Humility qualifies for the accomplishment of the promise, faith sucks the breasts of it, and patient-waiting hangs by the breast till the milk come abundantly.

(2.) But no lifting up of God's children here are any more than pledges of lifting up. God gives worldly men their stock here, but his children get nothing but a sample of theirs here, Psalm xvii.

14. Even as the servant at the term gets his fee in a round sum, while the young heir gets nothing but a few pence for spending money. The truth is, the same spending money is more valuable than the world's stock, Psalm iv. 7—"Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." But tho' it is better than that, and their services too, and more worth than all their on-waiting, yet it is below the honour of their God to put them off with it, Heb. xi. 16. "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city."

II. The *partial* lifting up itself. What they will get, getting this lifting up promised to the humbled. Why, they will get,

1. A *removal* of their humbling circumstances. God having tried them a while, and humbled them, and brought down their hearts, will at length take off their burden, remove the weight so long hung at them, and so take them off that part of their trial joyfully, and let them get up their back long bowed down; and this one of two ways.

(1.) Either in *kind*, removing the burden for good and all. Such a lifting Job got, when the Lord turned back his captivity, increased again his family and substance, which had both been desolated. David, when Saul his persecutor fell in battle, and he was brought to the kingdom after many a weary day, expecting one day to fall by his hand. It is easy with our God to make such turns in the most humbling circumstances.

(2.) Or in *equivalent*, or as good, removing the weight of the burden, that though it remains, it presses them no more, 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10. "And he

“ said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee,
 “ for my strength is made perfect in weakness.
 “ Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in
 “ my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest
 “ upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in mine
 “ infirmities.” Though they are not got to the
 shore, yet their head is no more under the water,
 but lifted up. David speaks feelingly of such a
 lifting up, Psalm xxvii. 5, 6. “ For in the time of
 “ trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion; in the se-
 “ cret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set
 “ me upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lif-
 “ ted above mine enemies round about me; therefore
 “ will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will
 “ sing, yea I will sing praises unto the Lord.” Such
 had the three children in the fiery furnace; the fire
 burnt, but it could burn nothing of them but their
 bonds; they had the warmth and light of it, but
 nothing of the scorching heat. Sometimes God
 lifts up his people this way in their humbling cir-
 cumstances.

2. A comfortable *sight* of the acceptance of their
 prayers, put up in their humbling circumstances:
 While prayers are not answered but trouble con-
 tinued, the hangers on about the Lord's hand are
 apt to think they are not accepted or regarded in
 heaven, because there is no alteration in their case,
 Job ix. 16. 17. “ If I had called, and he answered
 “ me, yet would I not believe that he had hearken-
 “ ed unto my voice, for he breaketh me with a tem-
 “ pest.” But that is a mistake; they are accept-
 ed immediately, though not answered, 1 John v. 14.
 “ And this is the confidence we have in him, that
 “ if we ask any thing according to his will, he hear-
 “ eth us.” The Lord does with them as a Father,
 with the letters coming thick from his son abroad,
 reads them one by one with pleasure, and careful-

ly lays them up, to be answered at his convenience. And when the answer comes, the son will know how acceptable they were to his father, Matt. xv. 28. So here, &c.

3. A heart-satisfying *answer* of these prayers, *ibid.* so as they shall not only get the thing, but see they have it as an answer of prayer; and they will put a double value on the mercy, 1 Sam. ii. 1. Accepted prayers may be very long of answering, many years, as in Abraham and David's case, but they cannot miscarry of an answer at length, Psal. ix. 18. The time will come when God will tell out to them according to the promise, that they shall change their note, and say, Psal. cxvi. 1. "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice, and my supplication." Looking on their lifting up as bearing the signature of the hand of a prayer-hearing God.

4. Full *satisfaction*, as to the conduct of Providence, in all the steps of the humbling circumstances, and the delay of the lifting up, however perplexing these were before, Rev. xv. 3. Standing on the shore, and looking back to what they have past through, they will be made to say, "He hath done all things well." These things which are bitter to Christians in the passing through, are very sweet in the reflection on them; so is Samson's riddle verified in their experiences.

5. They get the lifting up, together with the *interest* for the time they lay out of it. When God pays his bonds of promises, he pays both stock and interest together; the mercy is increased according to the time man waited on, and the expences and hardships sustained, during the dependence of the process. The fruits of common providences are soon ripe, soon rotten; but the fruit of the promise is

readily long a ripening, but then it is durable; and the longer it is a ripening, it is the more valuable when it comes. Abraham and Sarah waited for the promise about ten years, at length he thought on a way to hasten it, Gen. xvi. 1—6. That soon took in the birth of Ishmael, but he was not the promised son. They were coming into extreme old age ere the promise brought forth, Gen. xviii. 11. But when it came, they got it with an addition of the renewing of their ages, Gen. xxi. 7. and xxv. 1. The most valuable of all the promises was the longest in fulfilling, viz. the promise of Christ, that was four thousand years.

6. The spiritual enemies, that flew thick and throng about them in the time of the darkness of the humbling circumstances, will be scattered at this lifting up in the promise. 1 Sam. ii. 1, 5. "And Hannah prayed and said, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread, and they that were hungry ceased." Formidable was Pharaoh's host behind the Israelites, while they had the Red Sea before them; but, when they were through the sea, they saw the Egyptians dead on the shore, Exod. xiv. 30. Such a sight will they that humble themselves under humbling circumstances get of their spiritual enemies, when the time comes for the lifting up.

III. The *due time* of this lifting up. That is a very natural question of those in humbling circumstances, *Watchmen, What of the night?* And we cannot answer it to the humbled soul, but in general, Isa. xxi. 11, 12. So take these general observations on it,

1. The lifting up the humbled will not be *long-some* considering the weight of the matter; that is to say, considering the worth and value of the lifting up of the humble; when it comes it can by no means be reckoned long to the time of it. When you sow your corn in the fields, though it does not ripen so soon as some garden-seeds, but you wait three months or so, yet do not think the harvest long a coming, considering the value of the crop. This view the apostle takes of the lifting up in humbling circumstances, 2 Cor. iv. 17. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." So that a believer, looking on the promise with an eye of faith, and perceiving its accomplishment, and the worth of it when accomplished, may wonder it is come in so short on-coming. Therefore it is determined to be a time that comes soon, Luke xviii. 7. soon in respect of its weight and worth.

2. When the time comes, it and only it will appear the *due time*. To every thing there is a season, and a great part of wisdom lies in discerning it, and doing things in the season thereof. And we may be sure Infinite wisdom cannot miss the season by mistaking it, Deut. xxxii. 4. 'He is a rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment.' But whatever God doth will abide the strictest examination in that, as all other points, Eccl. iii. 14. 'I know that whatsoever God doth, it shall be for ever; nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: And God doth it that men may fear before him.' It is true, many times cast up to us as the due time for lifting up, which yet really is not so, because there are some circumstances hid to us, which renders that season

unfit for the thing.—Hence, John vii. 6. ‘My time “is not yet come, but your time is always ready.” But when all the circumstances, always foreknown of God, shall come to be opened out, and laid together before us, we will then see the lifting up is come in the nick of time, most for the honour of God and our good, and that it would not have done so well sooner.

3. When the time comes that is really the due time, the proper time for the lifting up a child of God from his humbling circumstances, it will not be *put off* one moment longer, Heb. ii. 3. “At “the end it shall speak, it will surely come, “it will not tarry.” Though it tarry, it will not linger nor put off to another time. O, what rest of heart would the firm faith of this afford us! there is not a child of God but would, with the utmost carefulness, protest against the lifting up before the due time, as against an unripe fruit casten to him by an angry father, that would set his teeth on edge. Sith it is so then, could we firmly believe this point, that it would undoubtedly come in the due time, without losing of a minute, it would afford a sound rest. It must be so, because God has said it; were the case never so hopeless, were mountains of difficulties lying in the way of it, at the appointed time it will *blow*, (Heb.) Hab. ii. 3. A metaphor from the wind rising in a moment after a dead calm.

4. The humbling circumstances are ordinarily carried to the utmost point of *hopelessness* before the lifting up. The knife was at Isaac’s throat before the voice was heard. 2 Cor. i. 8, 9. “For “we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of “our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we “were pressed out of measure, above strength, in

“ so much that we despaired even of life ; but we
“ had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we
“ should not trust in ourselves, but in God, who
“ raiseth the dead.” Things soon seem to us ar-
rived at that point ; such is the hastiness of our
spirits. But things may have far to go down after
we think they are at the foot of the hill. And we
are almost as little competent judges of the point
of hopelessness, as of the due time of lifting up.
But readily God carries his people’s humbling
circumstances downward, still downward, till they
come to that point. Two reasons are to be no-
ticed.

(1.) One from the *explanatory* cause of it.
Herein God is holding the same course which he
held in the case of the man Christ, the beloved
pattern copied after in all the dispensations of Pro-
vidence towards the church, and every particular
believer, Rom. viii. 29. He was all along a man
of sorrows ; as his time went on, the waters swel-
led more, till he was brought to the dust of death ;
then he was buried, and the grave-stone sealed,
which done, the world thought they were freely
quit of him, and he would trouble them no more.
But they quite mistook it ; then, and not till then,
was the due time for lifting him up. And the
liftings up that his people get most remarkably,
are only little pieces fashioned after this grand pat-
tern.

(2.) Another from the *final* cause, the end and
design Providence aims at in it, and that is to car-
ry the believer cleanly off his own, and all created
bottoms, to bottom his trust and hope in the Lord
alone, 2 Cor. i. 9. “ That we should not trust in
“ ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.”
The life of a Christian here is designed to be a life

of faith; and though faith may act more easily that it has some help from sense, yet it certainly acts most nobly, when it acts over the belly of sense. Then it is pure faith, when it stands only on its own native legs, the power and word of God, Rom. iv. 19, 20. "And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in the faith, giving glory to God." And thus it must do, when matters are brought to the utmost point of hopelessness.

5. Due *preparation* of the heart, for the lifting up out of the humbling circumstances, goes before the due time of that lifting up, according to the promise. It is not so in every lifting up; the lifting up of the common providences are not so critically managed; men will have them, will want them no longer, and God flings them to him in anger, ere they are prepared for them, Hos. xiii. 11. "I gave thee a king in mine anger." They can by no means abide the trial, and God takes them off as reprobate silver that is not able to abide it, Jer. vi. 29, 30.

This due preparation consists in a due humiliation, Psalm x. 17. And it often takes much work to bring about this, which is another point that we are very incompetent judges of. We would have thought Job was brought very low in his spirit, by the providence of God bruising him on the one hand, and his friends on the other, for a long time: Yet, after all he had endured both ways, God saw it necessary to speak to him himself, for his humiliation, chap. xxxviii. 1. By that spech of God himself he was brought to his knees, chap.

xl. 4, 5. And we would have thought he was then sufficiently humbled, and perhaps he himself thought so too. But God saw a farther degree of humiliation necessary, and therefore just begins anew to speak for his humiliation, which at length laid him in the dust, chap. xlii. 5, 6. And when he was thus prepared for lifting up, he got it.

There are six things I conceive, belong to this humiliation, preparatory to lifting up.

1. A deep sense of *sinfulness* and *unworthiness* of being lifted up at all, Job xl. 4. "Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth." People may be long in humbling circumstances, ere they be brought this length; even good men are much prejudiced in their own favours, and may so far forget themselves as to think God deals his favours unequally, and is mighty severe on them more than others. Elihu marked this wrong in Job, under his humbling circumstances, Job xxxiii. 10—12. And I believe it will be found, there is readily a greater keenness to vindicate our honour from the imputation the humbling circumstances seem to lay upon it, than to vindicate the honour of God in the justice and equity of the dispensation. The blindness of an ill natured world, still ready to suspect the worst causes for humbling circumstances, as if the greatest sufferers were surely the greatest sinners, Luke xiii. 4. gives a handle for this bias of the corrupt nature.—But God is a jealous God, and when he appears sufficiently to humble, he will cause the matter of our honour to give way, like a sandy brae under our feet, while we shall be obliged to *clever (grip hastily)* to the vindication of his.

2. A *resignation* to the divine pleasure as to the time of lifting up. God gives the promise, leaving

the time blank as to us. Our time is always ready, and we rashly fill it up at our own hand. God does not keep our time, because it is not the due time. Hence we are ready to think his word fails, whereas it is but our harsh conclusion from it that fails, Psal. cxvi. 11. "I said in my haste, All men are liars." Several of the saints have gotten on the finger ends by this means, and thereby learned to let alone filling up that blank. The first promise was thus used by believing Eve, Gen. iv. 1. Another promise was so by believing Abraham, after about ten years on-waiting, Gen. xvi. another by David forecited, Psal. cxvi. 11.

If this be the case of any child of God, let them not be discouraged upon it thinking they were over-rash in applying the promise to themselves: they were only so in applying the time to the promise; a snapper that saints in all ages have made, which they repented, and saw the folly of, and let alone that point for the time to come; and then the promise was fulfilled in its own due time. Let them in such circumstances go and do likewise, leaving the time entirely to the Lord.

3. An entire *resignation* as to the way and manner of bringing it about. We are ready to do, as to the way of accomplishing the promise, just as with the time of it, to set a particular way for the Lord's working of it; and if that be not kept, the proud heart, is stumbled, 2 Kings v. 11. "But Naaman was worth, and he went away, and said, Behold, I thought he will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place." But the Lord will have his people broke off from that too, that they shall prescribe no way to him, but leave that to him entirely, as in that same case, verse 14.—"He went down and dipped himself seven

“times in Jordan, according to the saying of the “man of God—and he was clean.” The compass of our knowledge of ways and means is very narrow, as if one is blockt up, oft-times we cannot see another: but our God knows many ways of relief, where we know but one, or none at all; and it is very usual for the Lord to bring the lifting up of his people in a way they had no view to, after repeated disappointments from those airths whence they had great expectation.

4. Resignation as to the *degree* of the lifting up, yea, and as to the very being of it in time. The Lord will have his people weaned so, that however hasty they have sometimes been, that they behoved to be so soon lifted up, and could no longer bear, they shall be brought at length to set no time at all, but submit to go to the grave under their weight, if it seem good in the Lord’s eyes; and in that case they will be brought to be content with any measure of it in time, without prescribing how much. 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26. “If I shall find favour “in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again— “But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; “behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth “good unto him.”

5. The continuing of *praying* and *waiting* on the Lord in the case, Eph. vi. 18. “Praying al- “ways with all prayer and supplication in the Spi- “rit, and watching thereunto with all persever- “ance.” It is pride of heart, and unsubduedness of spirit, that makes people give over praying and waiting, because their humbling circumstances are lengthened out time after time, 2 Kings vi. 33. But due humility, going before the lifting up, brings men into that temper, to pray, wait, and

hang on resolutely, setting no time for the giving it over, till the lifting up come, whether in time or eternity, Lam. iii. 49, 50.

6. Mourning under *mismanagements* in the trial, Job xlii. 3. "Therefore have I uttered that I understood not, things too wonderful for me, which I knew not." The proud heart dwells and expatiates on the man's sufferings in the trial, and casts out all the folds of the trial on that side, and views them again and again. But when the Spirit of God comes duly to humble, in order to lifting up, he will cause the man to pass, in a sort, the suffering side of the trial, and turn his eyes on his own conduct in it, ransack it, judge himself impartially, and condemn himself; so that his mouth will be stopt. This is that humility that goeth before the lifting up in time, in the way of the promise.

II. We proceed to consider the lifting up as brought about at the *end of time*, in the other world. And,

1st, A word as to the *nature* of this lifting up. Concerning it we shall say these five things:

1. There is a *certainty* of this lifting up, in all cases of the humbled under humbling circumstances.—Tho' one cannot, in every case, make them sure of a lifting up in time, yet they may be assured, be the case what it will, they will, without all peradventure, get a lifting up on the other side, 2 Cor. v. 1. "For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Though God's humble children may both breakfast and dine on bread of adversity, and water of affliction, they will be sure

to sup sweetly and plentifully. And the believing expectation of the latter might serve to qualify the former, and make easy under it.

2. It will be a *perfect* lifting up, Heb. xii. 23. They will be perfectly delivered out of their particular trials and special furnace, be what it will, that made them many a weary day. Lazarus was then delivered from his poverty and sores and lying at the rich man's gate, Luke xvi. 22. and fully delivered. Yea will get a lifting up from all their humbling circumstances together. All the imperfections will then be at an end, inferiority in relations, contradictions, afflictions, uncertainty, and sin. If it was long a coming, there will be a blessed moment when they shall get all together.

3. They will not only be raised out of their low condition, but they will be set up *on high*, as Joseph: not only brought out of prison, but made ruler over the land of Egypt. And they will be lifted up,

(1.) Into a high *place*, Luke xvi. 22. "The beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." Now they are at best in a low place, but upon this earth; there they will be seated in the highest heavens, Phil. i. 23. with Eph. iv. 10. Often in their humbling circumstances, they are obliged now to embrace dunghills; then they will be set with Christ on his throne, Rev. iii. 21. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne." Though their belly now cleaves to the earth, and men say, Bow down, that we may pass over you, they will then be settled in the heavenly mansions, above the sun, moon and stars.

(2.) Into a high *state* and *condition*, a state of perfection. Out of all their troubles and uneasinesses, they will be set into a state of rest; from

their mean and inglorious condition, they will be advanced into a state of glory; their weighted and sorrowful life will be succeeded with a fulness of joy; and, for their humbling circumstances, they will be clothed with eternal glory and honour.

4. It will be a *final* lifting up, after which there will be no more casting down for ever, Rev. vii. 16. When we get a lifting up in time, we are apt to imagine fondly we are at the end of our trials; but we soon find we are too hasty in our conclusions, and the cloud returns, Psal. xxx. 6, 7. "In my prosperity, I said, I shall never be moved. Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." But then indeed the trial is quite over, the fight is at an end, and then is the time of the retribution and triumph.

5. There will not be the least remaining *uneasiness* from the humbling circumstances, but, on the contrary, they will have a glorious and desireable effect. I make no question but the saints will have the remembrance of their humbling circumstances they were under here below. Did the rich man in hell remember his having five brethren on earth, how sumptuously he fared, how Lazarus sat at his gate; and can we doubt but the saints will remember perfectly their heavy trials? Rev. vi. 10. But then they will remember them as waters that fail; as the man recovered to health, remembers his tossings on the sick-bed; and that is the way of remembering that sweetens the present state of health beyond what otherwise it would be. Certainly the shore of the Red Sea was the place, that of all the places, was the fittest to help the Israelites to sing in the highest key, Rev. xv. 3. And the humbling circumstances of saints on the earth will be of the same use to them in heaven.

2dly, A word to the *due time* of this lifting up.— There is a particular definite time for it in every saint's case, which is the due time, but it is hid from us. We can only say in general,

1. Then is the due time for it, when our *work* we have to do in this world is over. God has appointed every one their task, fight, trial, and work; and, till that is done, we are in a sort immortal, John ix. 4. and xi. 9. That work is,

(1.) *Doing* work; work set to us, by the great Master, to be done for the honour of God and the good of our fellow-creatures, Eccl. ix. 10. We must be content to be doing on, even in our humbling circumstances, till that be done out. It is not the due time for that lifting up, till we are at the end of that work, and so have served our generation.

(2.) *Suffering* work. There is a certain portion of suffering that is allotted for the mystical body; and the head has divided to the several members their proportions thereof; and it is not the due time for that lifting up, till we have exhausted the share thereof allotted to us. Paul looked on his life as a going on in that, Col. i. 24.

2. When that lifting up comes, we will see it is come *exactly* in the due time; that it was well it was neither sooner nor later; for though heaven is always better than earth, and that it would be better for us, absolutely speaking, to be in heaven than on earth; yet certainly there is a time wherein it is better for the honour of God, and his service, that we be on the earth than in heaven, Phil. i. 34. "Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." And it will be no grief of heart to them when there, that they were so long in their humbling circumstances, and were not brought sooner.

Use 1. Let not then the humble cast away their *confidence*, whatever their humbling circumstances be; let them assure themselves there will come a lifting up to them at length; if not here, yet to be sure hereafter. Let them keep this in their view, and comfort themselves with it, for God has said it, Psalm ix. 18. "The needy shall not alway be forgotten." If the night were never so long, the morning will come at length.

2. Let *patience* have her perfect work. The husbandman waits for the return of his seed, the sea-merchant for the return of his ships, the store-master for what he calls year-time, when he draws in the produce of his flocks. All these have long patience and why should not the Christian too have patience, and patiently wait for the time appointed for his lifting up?

Ye have heard much of the *Crook in the Lot*; the excellency of humbleness of spirit in a low lot, beyond pride of spirit, though joined with a high one:—Ye have been called to humble yourselves in your humbling circumstances, and assured in that case of a lifting up. To conclude: We may assure ourselves, *God will at length break in pieces the proud, be they never so high; and he will triumphantly lift up the humble, be they ever so low.*

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