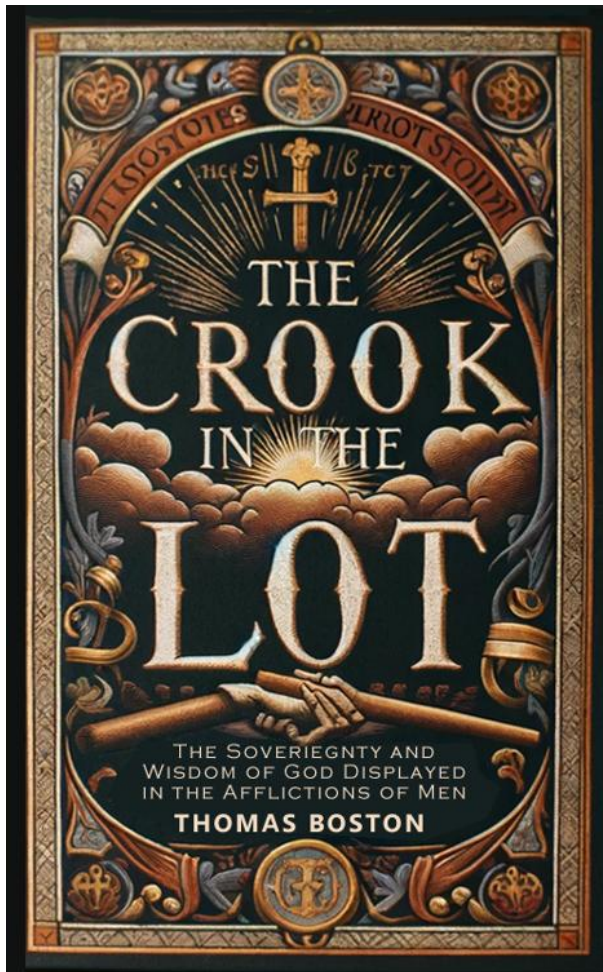


THE S I I B T C T

THE  
CROOK  
IN THE  
LOT

THE SOVERIEGNTY AND  
WISDOM OF GOD DISPLAYED  
IN THE AFFLICTIONS OF MEN

**THOMAS BOSTON**



# The Crook in the Lot

by Thomas Boston

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# Foreword

In the vast landscape of Christian literature, certain works stand out not merely for their theological depth, but for their enduring ability to speak directly to the human heart in every generation. *The Crook in the Lot* is such a book. Considered one of the most important Christian books ever written, its profound insights and practical wisdom have guided countless believers through the trials and tribulations of life, providing comfort and direction in the face of adversity.

At its core, *The Crook in the Lot* addresses the universal experience of suffering and the divine purpose behind it. Through the exposition of humbling circumstances, it illuminates the excellence of a humble spirit over pride, even when coupled with worldly success. The author meticulously draws from Scripture, demonstrating that God's providential hand is at work in every aspect of our lives, molding us into the likeness of Christ through our trials.

This book challenges us to embrace our humbling circumstances, not with a sense of defeat, but with a spirit of humility and trust in God's sovereign plan. It assures us that while we may face hardships, they are not without purpose. Instead, they are the tools God uses to refine our character and deepen our dependence on Him. The promise of a future lifting up, both in this life and the next, provides a hope that anchors the soul amidst life's fiercest storms.

The author, with pastoral care and theological precision, calls believers to humble themselves under God's mighty hand, assuring them of eventual exaltation. This message is not only comforting but

transformative, urging us to view our struggles through the lens of God's eternal purposes.

Reading *The Crook in the Lot* is like sitting at the feet of a wise mentor who gently guides you through the complexities of life with the light of Scripture. Its teachings are timeless, relevant to anyone seeking to understand God's ways in the midst of personal suffering.

As you explore the depths of this work, prepare to be challenged, encouraged, and uplifted. May its profound truths take root in your heart, leading you to a deeper trust in God and a more humble walk with Him. This book is a treasure trove of spiritual wisdom, a beacon of hope, and a reminder that God's ways, though often mysterious, are always perfect.

It is with great joy and a sense of profound privilege that I commend *The Crook in the Lot* to you. May it be a source of strength and inspiration, guiding you through the valleys and leading you ever closer to the One who promises to lift up the humble in due time.

Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight which he has made crooked? - Ecclesiastes 7:13

## **Introductory Remarks**

A proper view of afflicting events is absolutely essential for a Christian demeanor under them, and this view can only be achieved

through faith, not through our senses. For it is the light of the world alone that portrays them accurately, revealing in them the work of God, and therefore, designs that are fitting to the Divine perfections. When they are seen with the eye of faith and properly contemplated, we have an accurate view of afflicting events, suitable to calm the turbulent emotions of corrupt passions under grim outward appearances.

In this context, Solomon, in the earlier part of this chapter, presents several paradoxes, which are surprising judgments in favor of certain things that, to the eye of sense, appear gloomy and dreadful, and are thus generally regarded as grievous and shocking. He declares that the day of one's death is better than the day of one's birth; specifically, the day of death of one who, having become the friend of God through faith, has lived a life to the honor of God and service of his generation, and thereby gained for himself a good and reputable name better than precious ointment (Ecclesiastes 7:1). Similarly, he asserts that the house of mourning is preferable to the house of feasting, sorrow to laughter, and a wise man's rebuke to a fool's song. Though the latter are indeed more pleasant, yet the former are more profitable (Ecclesiastes 7:2-6). Observing with concern how men are at risk, not only from the world's frowns and ill-treatment, oppression making a wise man mad, but also from its smiles and flattery, a gift destroying the heart. Therefore, since there is danger whichever way it goes, he declares that the end of every worldly thing is better than the beginning of it (Ecclesiastes 7:7-8). From this, he rightly concludes that it is better to be humble and patient than proud and impatient under afflicting dispensations; for, in the former case, we wisely submit to what is truly best; in the latter, we resist it (Ecclesiastes 7:8). He advises against being angry with our lot because of the adversity in it (Ecclesiastes 7:9). He cautions against making odious comparisons of former and present times,

implying undue reflections on God's providence (Ecclesiastes 7:10). Against that querulous and fretful disposition, he first prescribes a general remedy, namely, holy wisdom, as that which enables us to make the best of everything and even gives life in killing circumstances (Ecclesiastes 7:11-12); and then a particular remedy, consisting of a proper application of that wisdom towards taking an accurate view of the situation: "Consider the work of God: for who can make straight what He has made crooked?" (Ecclesiastes 7:13).

The remedy proposed here comprises two key points: first, the remedy itself; second, its appropriateness.

1. **The Remedy Itself:** This involves a wise consideration of God's hand in all our afflictions: "Consider the work of God," particularly in the crooked, rough, and disagreeable parts of your lot—the crosses you encounter in life. You are acutely aware of the cross itself. Indeed, you ponder it deeply, turning it over in your mind and examining it from every angle. You focus on the various secondary causes of it, which leads you to agitation and unrest. But if you seek peace and contentment, raise your eyes heavenward and discern God's doing in it, the work of His hand. Contemplate this, and consider it carefully; observe the primary cause of the crookedness in your lot; recognize how it is the work of God, His doing.
2. **The Suitableness of This View:** Such a perspective on the crookedness in our lot is very apt to quell improper uprisings of the heart and to calm us: "For who can make that straight which God has made crooked?" Concerning the crookedness in your lot, it is God who has made it; and it must persist as long as He wills it. Even if you exert your utmost effort to smooth it out or make it straight, your attempt will be futile: it will remain



unchanged despite all your efforts. Only He who made it can amend it or make it straight. This reflection, this consideration of the matter, is an apt means to simultaneously silence and satisfy men, thus leading them to a dutiful submission to their Maker and Governor under the crookedness in their lot.

Now, let us unfold the purpose of this text under these three headings:

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

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

III. Considering the crookedness in the lot as the work of God, or His making, is a proper means to bring us to a Christian demeanor under it.

## I.

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

In considering this point, we must reflect upon two aspects: the crook itself, and God's role in making it.

1. **The Crook Itself:** To gain a clearer understanding of the crook in our lot, we must first establish a few foundational points.

1. **First:** There is a predetermined sequence of events, orchestrated by the providence of God, that each of us experiences throughout our life in this world. This sequence constitutes our lot, as it is allotted to us by our sovereign God, our Creator, and Governor, "in whose hand is our breath, and whose are all our ways." The sequence of events varies greatly from person to person, as per the will and pleasure of the supreme Manager, who orders the conditions of men in the world with great diversity, some moving in a higher, some in a lower sphere.
2. **Second:** Within this sequence of events, certain occurrences are contrary to us and against our natural inclinations; these constitute the crook in our lot. As long as we remain in this world, our lot and condition will include both favorable and unfavorable events. Sometimes, events proceed smoothly and agreeably; then, suddenly, an incident occurs that disrupts this course, causing discomfort and pain, similar to how a wrong step causes one to limp.
3. **Third:** Every person's lot in this world contains some crook. Those prone to complaining often make unfavorable comparisons. They observe others from a distance and see only what appears straight and ideal, concluding that their neighbor's lot is perfectly straight. However, this judgment is flawed; there is no perfection here; no lot in this world is without a crook. "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" (Ecclesiastes 1:14-15). Who would have thought that Haman's lot was crooked when his family was thriving, and he was prosperous in

wealth and honor, serving as prime minister in the Persian court, highly favored by the king? Yet, there was a crook in his lot that troubled him so much that "all this availed him nothing" (Esther 5:13). Each person feels their own pain, even if others do not perceive it. Nobody's lot in this world is entirely crooked; there are always some straight and even parts in it. Indeed, when passions rise and cast a mist over the mind, one might declare that everything is wrong, and nothing is right. While such a statement might be true in hell, where there is no drop of comfort (Luke 16:25), it is never true in this world. Here, it always remains true that "it is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed" (Lamentations 3:22).

4. **Fourth:** The crook in the lot entered the world through sin; it is a consequence of the fall. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin" (Romans 5:12), under which death the crook in the lot is included, as a state of comfort or prosperity is expressed in Scripture by living (1 Samuel 25:6, John 4:50-51). Sin so distorted the hearts and minds of men that they became crooked in relation to the holy law, and God justly altered their lot to reflect this crookedness. This crook in our lot follows our sinful condition inseparably until we shed this body of sin and death and enter heaven's gates.

These preliminary observations being made, a crook in the lot speaks, in general, of two things: (1) Adversity, and (2) Continuance. Accordingly, it defines the day of adversity, which stands in contrast to the day of prosperity, as noted in the verse immediately following the text.

**1. The Crook in the Lot is, First, Some Form of Adversity:** The prosperous part of one's lot, which proceeds according to one's desires, constitutes the straight and even part of it; whereas the adverse part, which runs contrary to our wishes, forms the crooked part of it. God has intertwined these two elements in the conditions of men in this world: just as there is some prosperity, creating the straight line, there is also some adversity, creating the crook. This mixture is found not only in the lot of saints, who are assured that "in the world they shall have tribulation," but even in the lot of all, as already observed.

**2. Secondly, it is Adversity of Some Continuance:** We do not consider something crooked which, though forcibly bent and bowed together, quickly returns to its former straightness. These are mere twinges of the rod of adversity, which pass as quickly as a stitch in one's side, setting all right again immediately. One's lot may be suddenly overcast, and the cloud vanish before it is fully perceived. But under the crook, one has the leisure to feel the sting, and becomes concerned with making the crook straight. Hence, the crook in the lot is adversity, enduring for a shorter or longer duration.

Now, there are three types of crooks in the lot that afflict the children of men.

**1. A Crook Made by a Single Adverse Dispensation with Lasting Effects:** Such a crook did Herod's cruelty make in the lot of the mothers in Bethlehem, who were left "weeping for their slain children, and

would not be comforted, because they were not" (Matthew 2:18). A single misstep may soon be made, which causes a man to limp for the rest of his life. "As the fishes are taken in an evil net, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time" (Ecclesiastes 9:12). An event may occur in a moment that causes the individual to walk haltingly to the grave.

**2. A Crook Made by a Series of Adverse Dispensations:** These may be of the same or different kinds, following hard upon one another and leaving lasting effects. Thus, in the case of Job, while one messenger of evil tidings was yet speaking, another arrived (Job 1:16-18). Consecutive adverse events, one following closely upon the other, create a severe crook. It is like one who, after regaining balance from a misstep on unstable ground, steps onto another unstable piece, which immediately gives way as well; or, like a traveler on a mountainous path, who, after laboriously crossing one mountain, anticipates the plain, only to find yet another mountain to traverse. This was Asaph's experience, nearly causing him to forsake his faith until he "went into the sanctuary," where the mystery of providence was unveiled to him (Psalm 73:13-17). Solomon notes, "There are just men to whom it happens according to the work of the wicked" (Ecclesiastes 8:14), as providence seems to run against them. Whoever has not experienced this at some point in their life, surely Joseph did in his youth, Jacob in his middle years, Peter in his old age (John 21:18), and our Savior throughout His life.

**3. A Crook Made by One Adverse Dispensation Replacing Another:** This occurs when one adversity, with lasting effects, is replaced by another. When one crook is straightened, another arises in its place. Thus, there is always a crook. Lack of children had long been the crook in Rachel's lot (Genesis 30:1). When that was finally resolved, another took its place—difficult labor in childbirth (Genesis 35:16). This world is a wilderness where our station may change, but the move will be from one wilderness to another. When one part of the lot is made even, soon another part becomes crooked.

More particularly, the crook in the lot possesses four characteristics inherent to that which is crooked.

**1. Disagreeableness:** A crooked thing is wayward; and, when laid to a rule, it does not conform but deviates. There is nothing in anyone's lot that is crooked in relation to the will and purposes of God. Take the most harsh and dismal dispensation in one's lot and measure it against the eternal decree, formed in the depths of infinite wisdom before the world began, and it aligns perfectly, without the slightest deviation, "all things being worked after the counsel of His will" (Eph 1:11). Measure it against the providential will of God in the governance of the world, and there is perfect harmony. If Paul is to be bound in Jerusalem and "delivered into the hands of the Gentiles," it is "the will of the Lord that it should be so" (Acts 21:11, 14). Therefore, the greatest crook in the lot on earth is straight in heaven. There is no disagreeableness there. But in every person's lot, there is a crook concerning their mind and

natural inclination. The adverse dispensation lies cross to that rule and will by no means conform to it or harmonize with it. When Divine Providence lays one against the other, there is evident disagreeableness—the man’s will goes one way, and the dispensation another—the will inclines upwards, and adverse events press downwards, thus they are contrary. And there, and only there, lies the crook. This disagreeableness renders the crook in the lot a fit matter of trial and exercise for us in this state of probation. If you would approve yourself to God, walking by faith and not by sight, you must quiet yourself in the will and purpose of God and not insist that it should conform to your mind (Job 34:23).

- 2. Unsightliness:** Crooked things are unpleasant to the eye, and no crook in the lot appears joyous but grievous, presenting an unsightly appearance (Heb 12:11). Therefore, men must beware of allowing their thoughts to dwell too much on the crook in their lot, or keeping it constantly in view. David recounts a harmful experience in this regard: “While I was musing, the fire burned” (Ps 39:3). Jacob acted more wisely by naming his youngest son Benjamin, the son of the right hand, instead of Benoni, the son of my sorrow, as his dying mother had called him. By this means, he prevented the crook in his lot from being brought afresh to mind whenever his son’s name was mentioned. Indeed, a Christian may safely take a steady and leisurely view of the crook in his lot in the light of the holy Word, which represents it as the discipline of the covenant. Thus, faith will uncover a hidden beauty in it, beneath a very

unsightly outward appearance, perceiving its suitability to the infinite goodness, love, and wisdom of God, and to the real and most valuable interests of the individual. By this means, one comes to take pleasure, and a most refined pleasure, in distress (2 Cor 12:10). Yet, whatever the crook in the lot may be to the eye of faith, it is not all pleasant to the eye of sense.

3. **Unfitness for Motion:** Solomon observes the cause of the uneasy and ungraceful gait of the lame: “The legs of the lame are not equal” (Prov 26:7). This uneasiness is felt by those who are exercised about the crook in their lot. A high spirit and a low adverse lot create great difficulty in the Christian walk. Nothing gives temptation easier access than the crook in the lot; nothing is more likely to cause missteps. Therefore, the apostle exhorts, “Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way” (Heb 12:13). Those laboring under it should be pitied, not harshly judged, though few learn this lesson until taught by their own experience. It is long since Job observed, “He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease” (Job 12:5).

4. **Aptness to Catch and Entangle:** Like hooks, “fish-hooks” (Amos 4:2), the crook in the lot easily entangles and agitates the spirit, irritating corruption. Satan diligently uses it for these dangerous purposes; once this point is gained by the tempter, the tempted, before they are aware, find themselves ensnared, unsure of how to extricate themselves. In this temptation, it often



resembles a crooked stick troubling a still pool, not only stirring up the mud but also bringing to the surface some very unsightly thing. Thus, it brought up a trace of blasphemy and atheism in Asaph's case: "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain and washed my hands in innocence" (Ps 73:13). As if he had said, "There is nothing at all in religion; it is a vain and empty thing that profits nothing. I was a fool to have been concerned with purity and holiness, whether of heart or life." Ah! Is this the pious Asaph? How has he turned so unlike himself! But the crook in the lot is a handle by which the tempter makes surprising discoveries of latent corruption, even in the best.

Having examined the nature of the crook in the lot, let us now consider which part of our lot it may affect. Three conclusions can be established on this matter.

1. **First:** The crook may fall in any part of the lot; no part is exempt. Since sin is found in every part, the crook can manifest in any area. "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; we all do fade as a leaf" (Isaiah 64:6). The predominant stream of sin, which the crook readily follows, flows through various channels in different individuals. Given the diverse dispositions of men's minds, what may be an overwhelming burden to one, another may bear with ease.
2. **Second:** The crook may simultaneously affect multiple parts of the lot, with the Lord summoning terrors round about as on a solemn day (Lamentations 2:22).

Sometimes God introduces a single notable crook in a man's lot, but it may herald a troop of further afflictions. In such instances, the crooks multiply, causing the person to halt on all sides. While one adverse stream flows against him from one direction, another surges from a different direction until the waters converge and inundate him on every side.

- 3. Third:** The crook often strikes the tenderest part of the lot, the area where one is least capable of bearing it or perceives himself to be so. "It was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it. But it was you, a man my equal, my guide, and my acquaintance" (Psalm 55:12-13). If there is any particular part of the lot where one is most inclined to find comfort and security, it is there that the thorn is likely to be placed, especially if he belongs to God. In the area where he is least able to endure affliction, he will undoubtedly be tested. Herein lies the grand competition with Christ: "I take from them the desires of their eyes, and that upon which they set their minds" (Ezekiel 24:25). Since the crook in the lot is the specific trial appointed for each person, it is entirely reasonable and fitting to the wisdom of God that it strikes the area which most competes with Him for our affections.

More specifically, the crook may be observed to fall in these four parts of the lot.

- 1. First, in the Natural Part:** This affects persons as beings formed by the great God who created all things. The parents of mankind, Adam and Eve, were created

sound and whole, without the least blemish in soul or body. However, in their descendants, we often see notable deviations from that original state. Bodily defects, superfluities, deformities, and infirmities, whether natural or accidental, form the crook in the lot for some. They bear something unsightly or grievous. Such crooks are common and ordinary, and even the best are not exempt. It is solely due to sovereign pleasure that they are not more numerous. Tender eyes were the crook in the lot of Leah (Genesis 29:17). Rachel's beauty was counterbalanced by barrenness, the crook in her lot (Genesis 30:1). Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles, seemed to have a mean outward appearance, for which fools were prone to despise him (2 Corinthians 10:10). Timothy had a weak and sickly frame (1 Timothy 5:23). And there is a much greater crook in the lot of the lame, the blind, the deaf, and the mute. Some are intellectually weak, and it is the crook in the lot of many bright souls to be clouded and darkened by frail bodies. A notable instance is found in Job, who, despite his grave wisdom and patience, lamented, "I go mourning without the sun; I stand up, and cry in the congregation" (Job 30:28).

- 2. Secondly, in the Honorary Part:** Honor is due to all men, both small and great (1 Peter 2:17), based on the original constitution of human nature, made in the image of God. However, in the sovereign dispensation of Providence, the crook in the lot of some is dishonor; they are neglected and slighted, their credit remains low, and they go through life under a cloud, with their reputation tarnished. This sometimes results naturally

from their own foolish and sinful actions, as in the case of Dinah, whose reckless behavior brought lasting dishonor (Genesis 34). But when the Lord wills a crook of this kind in one's lot, innocence cannot avert it in an ill-natured world, and true merit cannot rectify it to make one's lot straight. Thus, David laments, "Those who see me outside flee from me. I am forgotten like a dead man, out of mind. I am like a broken vessel. For I have heard the slander of many" (Psalm 31:11-13).

- 3. Thirdly, in the Vocational Part:** Whatever a man's calling or station in the world, whether sacred or civil, the crook in his lot may appear there. Isaiah was an eminent prophet, yet largely unsuccessful (Isaiah 53:1). Jeremiah faced such continuous discouragement and mistreatment in his prophetic role that he nearly abandoned it, declaring, "I will not make mention of Him, nor speak anymore in His name" (Jeremiah 20:9). The Psalmist notes that industrious men in their civil business often face this crook, despite their efforts. "God blesses them and does not allow their cattle to decrease. But they are diminished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow" (Psalm 107:37-39). Such was the crook in Job's lot after a long period of prosperity. Many diligently pursue their employments, yet a crook in that part of their lot prevents success. Without Divine command for their success, human efforts are futile: "Who is he that says, and it comes to pass, when the Lord does not command it?" (Lamentations 3:37). Despite skill and industry, providence can thwart their enterprises, leading to continuous hardship. "The race is not to the swift, nor

the battle to the strong, neither bread to the wise” (Ecclesiastes 9:11). Providence interposes, disrupting human plans and efforts.

4. **Lastly, in the Relational Part:** Relations, the joints of society, often bear the crook in the lot, causing the greatest pain. While meant to be sources of comfort, they frequently bring bitterness. Sometimes this crook arises from the loss of a relation, as in Jacob’s sorrow over Rachel’s death and Joseph’s presumed death, nearly breaking him. Job lamented, “You have made desolate all my company” (Job 16:7), referring to the loss of his children. Sometimes it comes from affliction of relations, as when the believing woman cried, “Have mercy on me, O Lord; my daughter is grievously vexed” (Matthew 15:22). Ephraim felt the sting of family afflictions when naming his son Beriah, “because it went evil with his house” (1 Chronicles 7:23). With more relations comes the potential for greater sorrow. Sin has distorted creation, making every relation susceptible to the crook. In families, there are harsh and unjust masters, froward and unfaithful servants; in neighborhoods, selfish and troublesome individuals; in the church, unedifying ministers and disorderly people; in the state, oppressive magistrates and rebellious subjects. These all contribute to the crook in their relatives’ lot. Thus far, we have considered the crook itself.

# On God's Making of the Crook in Our Lot

Having examined the nature of the crook itself, we shall now consider God's role in making it. We will address three aspects: I. That the crook is of God's making; II. How it is of His making; and III. Why He makes it.

## I. That the Crook in the Lot is of God's Making

This truth is supported by three considerations:

1. **First:** The crook in the lot, regarded as a crook, is a penal evil, irrespective of its specific nature; whether its immediate cause and occasion are sinful or not, it is certainly a punishment or affliction. As such, it may be justly brought upon us by our Sovereign Lord and Judge, who explicitly claims responsibility for it. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord has not done it?" (Amos 3:6). Hence, since no penal evil can exist without God's making, and the crook in the lot is such an evil, it must be concluded to be of God's making.
2. **Second:** The doctrines of divine providence clearly demonstrate that God orchestrates every man's lot, including all its parts. He directs human affairs, turning them according to His will. "Whatever the Lord pleased, that He did in heaven and in earth, in the seas and all deep places" (Psalm 135:6). Nothing befalls us without His overruling hand. The providence that brought us into the world also places us in our specific conditions and locations, determined by Him who "has

determined the times and the bounds of our habitation” (Acts 17:26). This providence governs even the smallest details, such as “the hairs of our head being all numbered” (Matthew 10:29-30) and “a lot cast into the lap” (Proverbs 16:33). It extends to the free acts of our will, for “the king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as rivers of water” (Proverbs 21:1). It guides all our steps and those of others in relation to us, for “the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walks to direct his steps” (Jeremiah 10:23). This applies whether the steps causing the crook are deliberate and sinful, as in Joseph's brothers selling him into Egypt, or undesigned and accidental, as when one kills his neighbor while chopping wood due to the axe head slipping (Deuteronomy 19:5). There is a holy and wise providence governing both sinful and heedless actions of men, akin to a rider guiding a lame horse; the rider is not the cause of the horse's lameness. Thus, God is said to have sent Joseph into Egypt (Genesis 45:7) and to deliver one into his neighbor’s hand (Exodus 21:13).

3. **Lastly:** God has, by an eternal decree, as unchangeable as mountains of brass (Zechariah 6:1), appointed every aspect of each person’s lot, both the crooked and the straight parts. The same eternal decree that established the high and low parts of the earth, the mountains and valleys, also determined the heights and depths, prosperity and adversity, in the lot of humanity. These decrees are fulfilled in time, in perfect accordance with the divine plan.

The mystery of providence in governing the world is a structure erected by God, in exact conformity to His eternal decree, “who works all things after the counsel of his own will” (Ephesians 1:11). Thus, every crook in one’s lot can be traced back to this origin. Job exemplifies this pious understanding in his own experience: “He is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desires, even that he does. For he performs the thing that is appointed for me; and many such things are with him” (Job 23:13-14).

## **II. How the Crook in the Lot is of God’s Making**

To understand how the crook in the lot is of God’s making, we must distinguish between pure sinless crooks and impure sinful ones.

- 1. Pure and Sinless Crooks:** These are mere afflictions, grievous indeed, but not defiling. Such was Lazarus’s poverty, Rachel’s barrenness, Leah’s tender eyes, and the blindness of the man born blind (John 9:1). Crooks of this kind are of God’s making by the efficacy of His power directly bringing them to pass and causing them to be. He is the Maker of the poor. “Whoso mocks the poor, reproaches his Maker” (Proverbs 17:5), meaning God, who made him poor, as it is written, “The Lord makes poor” (1 Samuel 2:7). God holds the key to the womb and, as He sees fit, either shuts it (1 Samuel 1:5) or opens it (Genesis 30:22). He forms the eyes (Psalm 94:9) and declares that the man was born blind “that the works of God should be made manifest in him” (John 9:3). To Moses, He says, “Who makes the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing,



or the blind? Have not I, the Lord?” (Exodus 4:11). Such crooks in the lot are directly from God, being the direct effects of His agency, as much as the heavens and the earth.

**2. Impure Sinful Crooks:** These crooks are both sins and afflictions, defiling as well as grievous. Such were the crooks in David’s lot through his family disorders: the defiling of Tamar, the murder of Amnon, the rebellion of Absalom—all unnatural acts. Similarly, Job’s lot was crooked by the Sabeans and Chaldeans, who took his substance and slew his servants. These were afflictions for David and Job but sins for the actors. Thus, the same event can be a heinous sin, bringing guilt, for one and an affliction, bringing suffering, for another. Crooks of this kind are not of God’s making in the same sense as pure crooks; He neither instills evil in hearts nor stirs up to it. “He cannot be tempted with evil, neither does He tempt any man” (James 1:13). Yet, these crooks are of His making through holy permission, powerful bounding, and wise overruling to a good end.

**1. He Holily Permits Them:** God allows men to “walk in their own ways” (Acts 14:16). Though He is not the author of these sinful crooks, causing them by His power, they could not occur without His permission. He could shut them out, but He sometimes wills not to hinder them. He withholds grace the sinner does not desire, removes restraint under which the sinner is uneasy, and leaves him to his own lusts. “Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone” (Hosea 4:17). “Israel would none of Me: so I gave them up

to their own heart's lusts" (Psalm 81:11-12). In this state, the sinful crook naturally follows the sinner's motion, like water running downhill when a gap is open. Thus, "Israel walked in their own counsels" (Psalm 81:12). David was silenced by this view of the matter under Shimei's cursings: "Let him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord has bidden him" (2 Samuel 16:10).

**2. He Powerfully Bounds Them:** "The remainder of wrath" (the creature's wrath) "you shall restrain" (Psalm 76:10). God bounds these crooks, preventing them from being more grievous than they are. He tells the sinful instrument, as He does the sea, "This far you shall come, but no farther; here your proud waves shall stop" (Job 38:11). He restrains them so they cannot exceed the limits He permits. Job's lot was crooked due to Satan's agency, yet God set bounds: "All that he has is in your power, only do not lay a hand on him" (Job 1:12). Satan went to the bound's limit but could not exceed it. When the bound was extended, "Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life" (Job 2:6), Satan made the crook as severe as permitted but no more. Without this bound, Satan would have killed Job when his attempts failed.

**3. He Wisely Overrules Them:** God directs sinful crooks to good purposes, befitting His perfection. While sinful instruments intend evil, God directs it to holy and good ends. Amnon's lust and Absalom's revenge were to punish David for his sin with Uriah. Job's crook, caused by Satan and wicked men, was to manifest Job's integrity. If God did not overrule these crooks, no good could come from them. His purposes cannot fail: "My counsel shall stand" (Isaiah

46:10). God turns sinful crooks to His glory and His people's good: "The Lord has made all things for Himself" (Proverbs 16:4). "All things work together for good to them that love God" (Romans 8:28). Haman's plot against the Jews was overturned (Esther 9:1). Joseph's brothers' sin, selling him into Egypt, was overruled by God for good: "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good" (Genesis 50:20).

### **III. Why God Makes a Crook in One's Lot**

It remains to inquire why God makes a crook in one's lot. This is clarified by uncovering the design of this dispensation—a matter of great importance for every Christian to understand and heed, in order to derive spiritual benefit from the crook in their lot. The design of it appears chiefly sevenfold.

1. **First, the Trial of One's State:** Whether one is in the state of grace or not, whether a sincere Christian or a hypocrite, is often tested by the crook in the lot. While every affliction is a test, the crook, being a continual trial, repeatedly exposes one's character, providing grounds for a decisive judgment. This was the foundation of Job's trial. The question was whether Job was an upright and sincere servant of God, as God testified, or merely a mercenary one, as Satan alleged. The trial hinged on the crook in his lot (Job 1:8-12, 2:3-6). Job's friends, except Elihu, aimed to prove him a hypocrite, with Satan using them to achieve his end. Just as God tested Israel in the wilderness for the land of Canaan, afflicting dispensations revealed Caleb and

Joshua as faithful while others perished. Similarly, the croak in the lot tests men for heaven. If one endures, he is proven a true saint, like Job; if not, he is a hypocrite, unable to withstand the test, like the wealthy man who approached Jesus (Mark 10:17, 21). Jesus created a croak in his lot by commanding him to sell all he had and follow Him. The man, unwilling to part with his wealth, failed the test and went away sorrowful, revealing his attachment to his possessions.

2. **Second, Excitation to Duty:** The croak in the lot awakens one to their duties, weaning them from the world and prompting them to seek the happiness of the other world. Many owe their spiritual awakening to the croak in their lot, which led them to serious reflection and a return to God. Like the prodigal son, brought to his senses by his suffering (Luke 15:17), the croak convinces them that their rest is not in this world. The persistent unease they experience whenever they seek comfort in worldly things leads them to conclude there is no hope from that quarter, driving them to seek rest in God. Thus, the croak creates new motives for turning to God, as they feel a need for heavenly comforts. The croak's message is clear: "Arise and depart, for this is not your rest" (Micah 2:10). Of all afflictive means, it most effectively detaches a real Christian from this life and world.
3. **Conviction of Sin:** Just as one who walks heedlessly and suddenly becomes lame is reminded with every painful step of the wrong step they took, so too does God create a croak in one's lot to convict them of a false

step or sinful course they have taken. This crook serves to recall to mind what the sinner might otherwise overlook, forget, or dismiss. By this means, their sin is set before them as an evil and bitter thing, and is kept in remembrance, causing their heart to bleed afresh at intervals. Thus, by the crook, “their sin finds them out” (Numbers 32:23) to their conviction, as “the thief is ashamed when he is found” (Jeremiah 2:26). Joseph’s brothers felt this acutely under the crook in their lot in Egypt: “We are verily guilty concerning our brother” (Genesis 42:21); “God has found out the iniquity of your servants” (Genesis 44:16). The nature and circumstances of the crook often refer so naturally to the false step or course, that it serves as a providential memorial, bringing the sin fresh to remembrance, and acting as a badge of the sinner’s folly in word or deed. When Jacob found Leah, through Laban’s deceit, palmed off on him instead of Rachel, how could he miss the stinging remembrance of the deception he had played on his own father, pretending to be Esau (Genesis 27:19)? How it must have galled him during the course of his marriage! He had imposed on his father, the younger for the elder; and Laban imposed on him, the elder for the younger. The dimness of Isaac’s eyes favored the former deceit, and the darkness of the evening the latter. He could rightly say, as Adonibezek did in another case, “As I have done, so God has requited me” (Judges 1:7). Similarly, Rachel, dying in childbirth, could hardly avoid reflecting on her rash words, “Give me children, or else I die” (Genesis 30:1). Even the holy Job, in his afflictions, read in them some false steps he had made in his youth, saying, “You write

bitter things against me, and make me possess the iniquities of my youth” (Job 13:26).

**4. Correction or Punishment for Sin:** The crook in the lot often serves as a correction or punishment for sin. In this, the scripture is fulfilled: “Your own wickedness shall correct you, and your backslidings shall reprove you” (Jeremiah 2:19). God may, for a time, overlook one’s sin, but later mark His displeasure by creating a crook in the sinner’s lot, as in the cases of Jacob and Rachel. Though the sin may be a single action or a short-lived course, the mark of Divine displeasure, as seen in the crook, can pain the sinner for a long time, teaching them repeatedly about the evil and bitter nature of their sin. David’s sin in causing Uriah’s death was soon over, but the consequence was that “the sword never departed from his house” (2 Samuel 12:10). Gehazi quickly obtained money through deceit, but his punishment was leprosy for himself and his descendants (2 Kings 5:27). This can happen even if the sin is pardoned regarding eternal punishment, as one may sincerely repent yet still carry the consequences of that sin. A person might be accepted in the Beloved, yet still bear a mark of Divine displeasure for their sin in the crook of their lot. “You were a God that forgave them, though you took vengeance on their inventions” (Psalm 99:8).

**5. Prevention of Sin:** The crook in the lot also serves to prevent sin. “I will hedge up your way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths” (Hosea 2:6). The crook often lies across some wrong

inclination of the heart, acting like a thorn-hedge or wall in the way the heart inclines. Worldly temptations often ensnare by appealing to one's specific temperament, but the crook in the lot wears off the allure, dulling corrupt affections and weakening temptation. This redirection prevents much sin, making the sinner ashamed and ready to turn back from their wayward course. The Lord crooks one's lot to "withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man" (Job 33:17), keeping him from falling into the pit. Though all men know what pleases them, only God knows what is most profitable. Thus, many are saved from excesses by the crook in their lot, which they would otherwise pursue with reckless abandon. They would bless God for the crook if they calmly considered the likely outcome of its removal. When tempted to fret under the crook's hardship, one should consider whether they are spiritually prepared to bear its removal in a Christian manner.

**6. Discovery of Latent Corruption:** The crook in the lot serves to uncover hidden corruptions, whether in saints or sinners. There are certain corruptions in every man's heart that lie so close to the surface that they are easily seen. However, there are others so deeply embedded that they remain undetected. Just as fire under a pot causes the scum to rise and overflow, so does the crook in the lot bring hidden corruptions to the surface. Who would have expected such strong passion in the meek Moses, as he displayed at the waters of strife, resulting in his exclusion from Canaan (Psalm 106:32-33, Numbers 20:13)? Who would have

thought Job, known for his patience, would accuse God of cruelty (Job 30:21)? Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, cursed the day of his birth and the man who brought the news to his father (Jeremiah 20:14-15). Even Asaph, a leader in Israel's worship, came close to declaring religion a vain pursuit (Psalm 73:13). These instances reveal the corruptions that lay hidden within them, brought to light by the crook in their lot. This design, though mocked by the proud, is consistent with Divine perfections, necessary for humbling sinners and staining the pride of all glory. It was precisely for this purpose that God placed a long-lasting crook in Israel's lot in the wilderness—to humble them, prove them, and reveal what was in their hearts (Deuteronomy 8:2).

**7. Exercise of Grace in the Children of God:** The crook in the lot also serves to exercise and strengthen the graces in God's children. Believers, due to indwelling corruption, are prone to spiritual laziness and inactivity, causing their graces to lie dormant. Additionally, certain graces, such as patience and long-suffering, are exercised only under specific circumstances. The crook in the lot rouses Christians from their spiritual slumber, calling forth both dormant and occasional graces into action. It reveals the true character of individuals, displaying both their flaws and their virtues. If God's grace resides within them, it will shine through, even if initially causing them to stagger. The crook in the lot tests and proves the genuineness and strength of their faith, leading to praise (1 Peter 1:6-7). It stimulates numerous acts of faith, hope, love, self-denial, resignation, and other



graces, leading to heavenly expressions of devotion that might otherwise remain unexpressed. These acts, though despised by carnal men, are precious in God's sight, being internal worship, and will be duly noted and rewarded by Him. The Psalmist teaches that God does not delight in physical strength or human ability, but in those who fear Him and hope in His mercy (Psalm 147:10-11). The exercise of the graces of His Spirit in His people is highly valued by God. Consequently, whatever grace a believer excels in, God will design a specific crook in their lot to test and prove its full strength. Abraham, excelling in faith, faced the ultimate test when called to offer up Isaac, his promised son (Genesis 21:12). Moses, known for his meekness, was tasked with leading a rebellious people, a trial designed to exercise his meekness (Numbers 12:3). Job, renowned for his patience, faced severe trials that required the full measure of his patience. Thus, God ensures that His people have ample opportunities to exercise and demonstrate the graces He has given them.

### **The Threefold Use of the Doctrine**

The application of this doctrine is threefold: for reproof, for consolation, and for exhortation.

#### **Use 1. For Reproof**

This doctrine reproves three sorts of persons.

## 1. **First, the Carnal and Earthly**

These are the individuals who fail to regard the crook in their lot with the awe and reverence due to its being of God's making. There is a clear signature of the Divine hand upon it, discernible to those who observe rightly, and this demands a reverent acknowledgment. The neglect of this is a harbinger of destruction: “Because they do not regard the works of the Lord, nor the operation of His hands, He shall destroy them, and not build them up” (Psalm 28:5). These people are deeply guilty, for they focus on secondary causes and the instruments of their affliction, failing to look to the primary cause, which is God Himself. Just as a dog snarls at the stone but does not look to the hand that throws it, so do they fail to see beyond the immediate agents of their troubles. This is tantamount to making a god of the creature, as though it could effect anything of itself, while it is merely an instrument in God's hand, “the rod of His anger” (Isaiah 10:5), “ordained of Him for judgment, established for correction” (Habakkuk 1:12).

Why do men fix their gaze upon the instruments of their crook, thus magnifying their scourges? The truth is, these instruments are often to be pitied rather than feared, as they occupy a most undesirable office. For their own corrupt gratification in afflicting others, the blow often returns upon their own heads, as with “the blood of Jezreel on the house of Jehu” (Hosea 1:4). It is especially undesirable to be thus employed against those who belong to God, for the grounds of God's quarrel with His people are typically different from those of the instruments He uses. For instance, Shimei cursed David as a bloody man for the

blood of Saul's house, which David was not guilty of, whereas God meant it for the blood of Uriah, which David could not deny (2 Samuel 16:7-8). Eventually, God will settle the quarrel with His people, and their afflictors will find their office thankless: "I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction" (Zechariah 1:15), says God in resentment towards the heathen who compounded His people's misery.

Those who attribute the crook in their lot to fortune or ill-luck, which are mere figments of imagination designed to obscure God's hand, are also guilty. What the Philistines doubted, they impiously resolve, essentially declaring, "It is not His hand that smote us, it was a chance that happened to us" (1 Samuel 6:9). Finally, those who despise the crook in their lot, making light of it or forgetting it, are equally guilty. While it is permissible to seek comfort in life moderately while committing one's case to the Lord, the common course among carnal men to utterly disregard the crook is reprehensible. If the crook is indeed of God's making, then it is a most indecent and unbecoming course, abhorred by all good men: "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord" (Proverbs 3:11). This method of dealing with the crook is desperate and destined to result in something worse than the affliction itself, merely masking the pain temporarily: "In that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping and to mourning, and behold joy and gladness, eating flesh and drinking wine: and it was revealed in my ears, by the Lord of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till you die" (Isaiah 22:12-14).

## **2. Secondly, the Unsubmissive**

These are they whose hearts, like the troubled sea, swell and boil with fretfulness and murmuring, unable to find rest under the crook in their lot. This is a most sinful and perilous course. The apostle Jude, describing those “to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever” (Jude 13), says of them, “these are murmurers, complainers” (Jude 16), constantly lamenting their lot, which is the meaning of the term used by the Holy Spirit. Since the crook in their lot, which their rebellious spirits refuse to submit to, is of God’s making, their behavior amounts to fighting against God. Their complaints and murmurings are ultimately directed against Him, regardless of the facade they present. When the Israelites murmured against Moses (Numbers 14:2), God charged them with murmuring against Himself: “How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmurs against Me?” (Numbers 14:27). Should not He who created us without our counsel be permitted to shape our lot without our input, or must we rise up against Him for the crook He has placed in it? This attitude reveals a proud creature who cannot endure God’s work or accept what He has done. How dire and dangerous is such a temper of spirit! How can one avoid being broken to pieces when pursuing such a course? “He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who has hardened himself against Him and prospered?” (Job 9:4).

## **3. Thirdly, the Careless and Unfruitful**

These are the ones who fail to dutifully align themselves with the intended purpose of the crook in their lot. God and

nature do nothing in vain. Since He has made the crook, there is surely a proper design behind it, which we are obligated to embrace, as stated, “Hear the rod” (Micah 6:9). If one does not shut their eyes but is willing to understand, they can easily discern the general purpose: to wean them from this world and move them to find rest in God. By considering the nature and circumstances of the crook, one can make a more specific discovery of its purpose. But, alas, the careless sinner, sunk in spiritual sloth and indifference, shows no concern to discern the providential design behind the crook; thus, he cannot align with it and remains unfruitful. All the efforts expended on him by the great Husbandman are in vain. “They cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty” (Job 35:9), groaning under the pressure of the crook and the weight of its instrument, “but none says, Where is God my Maker?” (Job 35:10). They neither look to nor turn to God.

## **Use 2. For Consolation**

This doctrine offers comfort to the afflicted children of God. Whatever the crook in your lot may be, it is of God’s making, and therefore you can view it with kindness. Since it is your Father who has fashioned it for you, rest assured that there is a favorable design in it for your benefit. A wise child welcomes his father's discipline, knowing that it is for his good; and shall not God's children welcome the crook in their lot, knowing it is designed by their Father, who cannot err, to work for their good according to His promise? The crook in a believer’s lot, however painful, is a part of the discipline of the covenant, the nurture secured to Christ's children by the promise of the Father. “If His children

forsake My law, and do not walk in My judgments, then I will visit their transgressions with the rod” (Psalm 89:30, 32).

Moreover, all who turn to God under the crook in their lot can take comfort in knowing that there is no crook but what can be made straight; for God made it, and surely He can mend it. He alone can straighten what He has made crooked, though none else can. Nothing is too hard for Him: “He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the dunghill; that He may set him with princes. He makes the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children” (Psalm 113:7-9). Do not say that your crook has lasted so long it will never be mended. Commit it into the hand of God, who made it, that He may mend it, and wait on Him. If it is for your good that it should be mended, it will be; for “no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly” (Psalm 84:11).

### **Use 3. For Exhortation**

Since the crook in the lot is of God’s making, then, eyeing the hand of God in your crook, be reconciled to it and submit under it, whatever it is. I say, eyeing the hand of God in it, for without this your submission under the crook cannot be a Christian submission, acceptable to God. You must recognize Him as the author of your affliction. This acknowledgment transforms a mere passive endurance into an active, willing submission, recognizing God's sovereign hand and wise purpose in the crook. This is the path to peace and spiritual growth, turning the crook from a

stumbling block into a stepping stone towards deeper fellowship with God.

### **Addressing Objections and Further Exhortation**

#### **Objection 1: The Crook from the Hand of the Creature**

Some may argue, “The crook in my lot comes from the hand of another person, and I do not deserve such treatment from them.”

**Answer:** While the immediate source of your affliction may indeed be another person, it is ultimately from the hand of God. Every penal evil, including your crook, is the Lord's doing. Therefore, God is the principal party involved, regardless of who the immediate agent is. Even if you do not deserve this treatment from the human instrument, you certainly deserve it from God. He may use any means He chooses for your correction, or act directly Himself, as it pleases Him.

#### **Objection 2: The Unyielding Instrument**

“But the crook in my lot could be straightened quickly if only the instrument of my affliction would relent, yet they refuse to see their error.”

**Answer:** If the time for the crook to be straightened had come, God would make it happen, regardless of the human agents involved. Even if they currently seem immovable, they would give way like sand underfoot when God's appointed time arrives. Until then, the situation itself serves

as a trial, highlighting God's sovereignty. This is illustrated by the adversaries of the church who devoured the Lord's people and justified their actions by saying, "We do not offend, because they have sinned against the Lord" (Jeremiah 50:7). They abused the people without acknowledging any fault, despite being far from innocent. Similarly, if your afflicters remain unrepentant, it underscores that God's timing for relief has not yet come.

Laying aside these objections, focus on seeing God's hand in your crook, and be reconciled to it. Submit to it, saying, "Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it" (Jeremiah 10:19). Consider these points to help you submit:

- 1. Duty to God:** You owe submission to God as your sovereign Lord and Benefactor. His sovereignty demands our submission, and it is no meanness of spirit to yield to the crook He has made. Rebelling against His yoke is madness. Given His beneficence, we should refrain from complaining about any crook He places in our lot, acknowledging that He has done us no wrong. "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10).
- 2. Unalterable Statute:** It is an unchangeable fact that everyone will experience a crook in their lot. "Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7). Especially those destined for heaven are assured of tribulation in this world (John 16:33). The crook in your lot is part of God's method of fitting you for heaven. Do not expect exemption from what is common to all humanity. "Shall the rock be removed



out of its place for you?” (Job 18:4). Your specific crook is tailored to your needs and is necessary for you.

3. **Resemblance to Hell:** A condition where one cannot submit to the crook in their lot is akin to hell, where sufferers bear an unbreakable yoke. There, the Almighty’s arm opposes them, and they constantly suffer without purification. Similarly, those who resist their crook here are ever suffering and ever sinning, with no relief.
4. **Loss by Non-Submission:** Failure to submit to the crook leads to great spiritual loss. Properly managed, the crook in one’s lot can bring about the best spiritual growth, as testified by the Psalmist: “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have kept Your word” (Psalm 119:67). Many in heaven now bless God for the crooks they endured on earth. It would be tragic to miss out on such spiritual growth and blessings. If the crook does not benefit you, it will surely harm you, increasing your guilt and aggravating your condemnation. Consider the effort God makes through the crook to draw you to Himself, and beware of rejecting His reproof: “Lest you mourn at the last and say, How I have hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof!” (Proverbs 5:11-12).

## **Proposition II:**

## **What God Sees Fit to Mar, We Shall Not Be Able to Mend in Our Lot**

Whatsoever crook God makes in our lot, we shall not be able to straighten. We shall:

I. Show God's marring and making a crook in one's lot, as He sees fit.

II. Consider men's attempts to mend or even that crook in their lot.

III. Understand in what sense it is to be comprehended that we shall not be able to mend or even the crook in our lot.

IV. Render some reasons for this truth.

### **I. On God's Marring and Making a Crook in One's Lot, as He Sees Fit**

1. **First**, God retains the choice of every person's crook to Himself, exercising His sovereignty (Matthew 20:15). It is not given to us to choose what our specific crook shall be or what peculiar burden we shall bear. Just as the potter fashions one vessel for honor and another for common use from the same lump of clay, so God designs one crook for one person and another for another, according to His own will and pleasure. "Whatever the Lord pleased, that He did in heaven and in earth" (Psalm 135:6).

2. **Second**, God perceives and considers the bias of every person's will and inclination, noting where it particularly diverges from Him, and thus where it

necessitates the special correction. Thus, He dealt with the rich young man: “One thing you lack; go your way, sell whatever you have, and give to the poor” (Mark 10:21). God observes the idolatrous attachment to possessions in each heart, recognizing what competes most strongly with His rightful place, and customizes the trial accordingly, creating a crook that addresses this rival.

3. **Third**, by His providence or a mere touch of His hand, God bends that part of a person’s lot contrary to their natural inclination. Henceforth, it lies in direct opposition to the bias of the individual’s will (Ezekiel 24:25). Herein lies the trial: the person’s will inclines one way, while their lot inclines another, frustrating their desires and revealing their submission to God’s will.
4. **Fourth**, God determines the duration of the crook in the lot, whether long or short, based on the holy purposes He intends to achieve through it (2 Samuel 12:10, Hosea 5:15). By His will, the crook is fixed such that no power in creation can alter it or straighten what He has made crooked.

## **II. Men’s Attempts to Mend or Even the Crook in Their Lot**

Men’s attempts to mend or even the crook in their lot consist essentially of efforts to align their circumstances with their own will, striving for a harmonious existence free of the cross. This endeavor encompasses three main aspects:

1. **First**, there is an inherent uneasiness under the crook in the lot; it is a burden hard to bear until one's spirit is tamed and subdued. "You have chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn me and I shall be turned" (Jeremiah 31:18). This chastisement serves to break the pride and self-will within us, which is why it is declared good to bear it (Lamentations 3:27), as it leads one to become like a weaned child.
2. **Second**, there is a natural and strong desire to have the crook removed, to have things go according to our inclinations. This desire is natural, as nature seeks to be freed from burdens. When this desire is kept in proper subordination to the will of God and is not too demanding, it is not sinful. "If it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will" (Matthew 26:39). Thus, many prayers of the people of God for the removal of the crook in their lot are acceptable.
3. **Third**, there is an earnest use of means to achieve this end. This naturally follows from the desire to be freed from the crook. The individual labors diligently in using means to be rid of the affliction. If these means are lawful and are followed with an eye to God, the attempt is not sinful, regardless of success.

### **III. Understanding That We Shall Not Be Able to Mend or Even the Crook in Our Lot**

It must be understood that we shall not be able to mend the crook in our lot by our own power. This does not imply hopelessness or that there is no remedy for the crook in our

lot, for with God nothing is impossible. “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” (Genesis 18:14). Even when the crook has persisted for a long time and has resisted all remedies, hope should not be lost. God can make even the most hopeless crook perfectly straight, as demonstrated in Job’s case.

However, we shall never be able to mend it by our own efforts. If the Lord does not intervene, the crook will remain immovable. This can be understood in three ways:

1. **First**, mere human effort will not succeed. “For by strength shall no man prevail” (1 Samuel 2:9). The most vigorous endeavors will not straighten the crook unless God gives it a touch of His hand. All efforts without relying on God are vain and fruitless, akin to plowing on the rock (Psalm 127:1-2).
2. **Second**, the use of all lawful means will be fruitless unless the Lord blesses them. “Who is he that says, and it comes to pass, when the Lord does not command it?” (Lamentations 3:37). Just as one may eat and not be satisfied, so one may use proper means to even the crook in their lot and yet achieve nothing. For nothing can be or do for us any more than God makes it to be or do. “The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; neither yet bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding” (Ecclesiastes 9:11).
3. **Third**, the crook will not be mended in our time but in God’s time, which seldom aligns with ours. “My time is not yet come, but your time is always ready” (John 7:6). Therefore, the crook often remains immovable, as if

kept by an invisible hand, until God's appointed time arrives. Then, it may disappear with a mere touch, signifying that God's time for straightening it has come.

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

- 1. Absolute Dependence on God:** We are entirely dependent on God for everything (Acts 17:28). Just as light depends on the sun and shadows on their objects, so we depend on God and can do nothing, great or small, without Him. God ensures we recognize this dependence, teaching us to rely on Him.
- 2. Irresistibility of God's Will:** His will cannot be thwarted. "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure" (Isaiah 46:10). When God wills one thing and the creature wills the opposite, it is clear which will prevail. The omnipotent arm of God cannot be resisted by human effort. "Who has hardened himself against Him and prospered?" (Job 9:4).

#### **Inferences**

- 1. Necessity of Submission:** We must yield and submit to the crook in our lot, for we may as well attempt to move the rocks and mountains established by God as to straighten what He has made crooked.
- 2. Self-Deception in Self-Efforts:** Attempting to straighten the crook by our own strength is self-deceptive and unsustainable. Like a stick forcibly bent straight, it will soon return to its crooked state.

3. **Seeking Divine Aid:** The only effective way to straighten the crook is by appealing to God.

### **Exhortation**

1. **Seek God's Help:** Let us turn to God to remove any crook that may be removed within the established order of things. Human nature cannot help but desire relief from affliction. Since we cannot mend what God has made crooked, we must seek Him who made it, to amend it, rather than relying on our own efforts.

### **Motives**

1. **Futility of Human Effort:** Without God, all attempts to remove the crook will be in vain (Psalm 127:1). No matter how resolute we are, if God does not will it, our efforts will be fruitless (Lamentations 3:37). Even the best means will fail without His blessing (Ecclesiastes 9:11).
2. **Potential for Worsening the Crook:** Efforts to straighten the crook can make it worse. A proud spirit wrestling with the crook often intensifies it. "Whoever breaks a hedge, a serpent shall bite him. Whoever removes stones shall be hurt with them" (Ecclesiastes 10:8-9). Murmurers in the wilderness experienced this firsthand, as their resistance to God's will only increased their burdens.
3. **God's Ability to Straighten Any Crook:** There is no crook beyond God's ability to remedy and make straight. "The Lord raises those who are bowed down"

(Psalm 146:8). He can achieve what seems impossible to us, bringing life where there is death and calling into existence what does not exist (Romans 4:17).

4. **God's Willingness to Be Engaged:** God desires to be involved in evening the crooks in our lives and calls us to seek Him for this purpose. "Call on Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you" (Psalm 50:15). He creates these crooks to draw us to Him, showcasing His power and goodness in resolving them (Hosea 5:15).
5. **Double Blessing in Divine Resolution:** When a crook is straightened by God's hand, it is a double mercy. Some crooks are resolved by common providence, often without people being spiritually exercised by them. These are transient and unsatisfying mercies (Psalm 78:30, Hosea 13:11). However, the sweetness of a crook straightened through humble submission and waiting on the Lord bears the mark of Divine favor, making it precious. "For I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God" (Genesis 33:10).
6. **God's Favor to His Children:** God often marks His special favor by making and mending notable crooks in the lives of His dearest children. The greatest crooks bring the richest spiritual experiences. This is evident in the lives of Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph, who experienced significant trials but received remarkable blessings as a result.
7. **God's Way is the Surest:** Seeking God with our crook is the shortest and surest path to relief. Out-of-



the-way attempts to straighten the crook by ourselves are fruitless and often make matters worse, as seen in Abraham's resort to Hagar. God is the prime mover, setting all things in motion for the evening of the crook, which without Him will remain immovable (Hosea 2:21-22).

### **Addressing Common Objections**

**Objection 1: “But it is needless, for I see that though the crook in my lot may mend, yet it never will mend. In its own nature it is capable of being removed, but it is plain it is not to be removed; it is hopeless.”**

**Answer:** Such language reflects unbelieving haste, which should be corrected by faith and patience (Psalm 116:11-12). Abraham, despite having substantial reasons to deem his situation hopeless, applied to God in faith for resolution (Romans 4:19-20). Sarah, too, had concluded her situation was hopeless and was rebuked for it (Genesis 18:13-14). Nothing justifies deeming it needless to apply to God in such cases. Faith teaches us that what seems impossible to us is not so with God, and patience reminds us to wait on His perfect timing.

**Objection 2: “But I have applied to Him again and again for it, yet it is never mended.”**

**Answer:** Delays at the court of heaven do not signify denials; rather, they are trials of the petitioners' faith and patience. Those who persevere will certainly see results in due time. “And shall not God avenge His own elect, which

cry day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily” (Luke 18:7-8). Sometimes, individuals become petulant about the crook in their lot, allowing it to slip from their prayers in despair, even as it remains a source of discomfort. However, if God intends to straighten it in mercy, He will compel them to bring it back into their prayers. “I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them” (Ezekiel 36:37). Receiving relief while neglecting prayer provides little comfort, for the ultimate resolution and comfort are found in continuous supplication and trust in God's timing. Even if the crook is never removed in this life, this should not prevent us from seeking God's help, for many answers await us in the world to come, where all prayers will be answered in full (Romans 7:24).

## **Directions for Rightly Managing the Application for Removing the Crook in the Lot**

### **1. Pray for It**

First and foremost, bring your request before God in prayer (Ezekiel 36:37). Pray in faith, believing that for the sake of Jesus, you shall certainly obtain relief in due time, and perhaps even in this life if it is beneficial for you; without doubt, you shall receive it in the life to come (Matthew 21:22). Those who sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb will not be disappointed (Revelation 15:3). In some cases,

extraordinary prayer with fasting is especially expedient (Matthew 17:21).

## **2. Humble Yourselves Under It**

Humble yourselves under the crook as the yoke laid upon you by the sovereign hand of God. Acknowledge, “I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him” (Micah 7:9). Justify God and condemn yourselves; kiss the rod and quietly submit to it. This is the most feasible way to be rid of it, as the end is thereby achieved. “You will prepare your hearts; You will cause Your ear to hear” (Psalm 10:17).

## **3. Wait Patiently for the Hand That Made It to Mend It**

Wait on patiently until the hand that made the crook mends it (Psalm 27:14). Do not give up the matter as hopeless because relief does not come as quickly as you wish; rather, “let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (James 1:4). Leave the timing of deliverance to the Lord; His timing will ultimately prove to be the best and will not be delayed beyond its appointed moment. “I, the Lord, will hasten it in its time” (Isaiah 60:22). Those who wait upon Him will not be disappointed, “for they shall not be ashamed that wait for Me” (Isaiah 49:23).

### **Addressing the Irremovable Crook in the Lot**

#### **Exhortation 2: Seek Suitable Relief from God for the Irremovable Crook in the Lot**

For those crooks in our lot that, in the settled order of things, cannot be removed or evened in this world, let us apply to God for suitable relief.

Consider, for instance, the common crook in the lot of the saints: indwelling sin. As God has determined that this crook is not to be removed here, He can certainly balance it and provide relief under it. The same principle applies to any crook that remains unremoved. In such cases, apply yourself to God to compensate for your losses in other ways. Here are five directives to keep in view:

- 1. Take God in Christ as Your All:** Embrace God in Christ to replace what has been withheld or taken from you, which constitutes the crook in your lot (Psalm 142:4-5). Every crook made in our lot by God is essentially Heaven's offer for a blessed exchange. "Sell whatever you have, and you shall have treasure in heaven" (Mark 10:21). In this divine exchange, God first removes an earthly comfort from us, expecting us to reach out and receive something heavenly in its place, particularly His Christ. If God has emptied your left hand of some earthly comfort, stretch out your right hand to receive Christ in its stead. Thus, the soul's union with Christ is likened to buying a pearl of great price, by selling all else (Matthew 13:45-46). Doing this will put you in balance with the crook in your lot.
- 2. Look to God as the Source of All Good:** Trust that the stream of blessings from God will flow as fully as ever, even when the crook in the lot has dried it up from the creature. This is the work of faith—to depend

on God for what is denied by the creature. “When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up” (Psalm 27:10). It is rational to expect this, for there is no good in the creature that does not come from God. Therefore, the good denied by the creature can be obtained directly from God, the fountain of all good. Plead with God thus: “Now, Lord, You have taken away such a creature-comfort; I must have as good from Yourself.”

3. **Seek the Spiritual Fruits of the Crook:** When one earthly trade fails, engage more vigorously in the spiritual trade. “When there is a crook in the lot making our earthly comforts low, set ourselves the more for spiritual attainments” (Hebrews 12:11). If our trade with the world sinks, let us drive a trade with heaven more fervently. Seek to gain more faith, love, heavenly-mindedness, contempt of the world, humility, self-denial, etc. (2 Corinthians 6:10). Thus, while losing on one hand, you will gain on another.
4. **Grace to Bear the Crook:** Seek grace to sustain you under the crook. Paul besought the Lord thrice regarding his thorn in the flesh and received the answer, “My grace is sufficient for you” (2 Corinthians 12:8-9). Whether the burden is light or heavy, the grace to bear it makes all the difference. Aim for grace proportioned to your trial; with such grace, though the crook remains, you are on even ground with it.
5. **Focus on Eternal Glory:** Keep your eye on the eternal rest and weight of glory in the world to come.

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen” (2 Corinthians 4:17-18). This eternal perspective will balance any crook in your lot. Those without a well-grounded hope of salvation will find the crook in their lot unbearably heavy. But the hope of eternal rest can sustain you through all present toil and trouble.

**Exhortation 3: Let us set ourselves rightly to bear the crook in our lot while God sees fit to continue it.**

What we cannot mend, let us bear Christianly, and not fight against God, thereby kicking against the pricks. So let us bear it:

1. **Patiently:** Bear it without fuming and fretting, or murmuring (James 5:7, Psalm 37:7). Though we lose our comforts in the creature through the crook in our lot, let us not lose the possession of ourselves (Luke 21:19). The crook in our lot makes us like one who has but a scanty fire to warm by: impatience scatters it, setting the house on fire and exposing us to danger. “He that has no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down and without walls” (Proverbs 25:28).
2. **With Christian Fortitude:** Bear it without sinking under discouragement. “Nor faint when you are rebuked of Him” (Hebrews 12:5). Satan’s work is to bend or break people’s spirits through the crook, often

bending to break them. Our work is to carry evenly under it, steering a middle course and guarding against splitting on the rocks on either hand. Our happiness does not lie in earthly comfort, nor does the lack of it render us miserable (Habakkuk 3:17-18). We are to resolutely hold on our way with a holy contempt and disregard for hardships. “The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger” (Job 17:9).

**Question:** When may one be reckoned to fall under sinking discouragement from the crook in his lot?

**Answer:** When it prevails to the point of unfitness for duties, either in our particular or Christian calling. It has carried us beyond moderate grief if it unfits us for the common affairs of life, which the Lord calls us to manage (1 Corinthians 7:24), or for the duties of religion, hindering them altogether or making one hopeless in them (1 Peter 3:7, Malachi 2:13).

3. **Profitably:** Bear it so that you may gain some advantage by it. “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Your statutes” (Psalm 119:71). There is an advantage to be made by it (Romans 5:3-5). It is certainly an ill-managed crook if we do not gain some spiritual good from it (Hebrews 12:11). The crook is a kind of spiritual medicine, and as it is wasted medicine if it purges no ill humors, its unpleasantness to the taste and gripings endured in vain, so too is a wasted crook if we are not bettered by it. “By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be

purged, and this is all the fruit, to take away his sin” (Isaiah 27:9).

### **Motives to Press This Exhortation**

**Motive 1:** There will be no evening of it while God sees fit to continue it. Behave as we will, and make what sallies we please in the case, it will continue immovable, fixed with bands of iron and brass. “But He is of one mind, and who can turn Him? And what His soul desires, even that He does. For He performs the thing that is appointed for me; and many such things are with Him” (Job 23:13-14). Is it not wisdom then to make the best of what we cannot mend? Make a virtue of necessity. What cannot be cured must be endured, and should be with Christian resignation.

**Motive 2:** An awkward carriage under it notably increases the pain of it. What makes the yoke gall our necks but that we struggle so much against it, and cannot let it sit at ease on us (Jeremiah 31:18)? How often are we 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 extra weight on the burden, making it heavier, while also weakening us, rendering us less able to bear it.

**Motive 3:** The crook in your lot is the special trial God has chosen for you to take your measure by (1 Peter 1:6-7). It is God’s fire, by which He tests what metal men are made of; Heaven’s touchstone for discovering true and counterfeit Christians. Some may bear and go through several trials, but the crook in the lot will reveal the naught, because they cannot bear that (Mark 10:21-22). Reflect then: “Here the



trial of my state turns; I must be proved either sincere or a hypocrite by this. Can any be a true 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 9:6, Psalm 47:4)? And does He not tell us that without that disposition, we are not His disciples? ‘If any man come to Me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brothers and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple’” (Luke 14:26). You may find you can submit to anything but that; but will not that mar all (Mark 5:21)? Did anyone ever sincerely close with Christ while reserving one thing in which they must be their own lord?

**Question:** “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?”

**Answer:** No, it is not so; but it necessarily accompanies and goes along with believing, flowing from the same saving illumination in the knowledge of Christ, by which the soul is brought to believe on Him. By this means the soul sees Him as an able Savior, and so trusts on Him for salvation; as the rightful Lord and infinitely wise Ruler, and so submits the lot to Him (Matthew 13:45-46). The soul taking Him for a Savior, takes Him also for a head and ruler. It is Christ’s giving Himself to us, and our receiving Him, that causes us to quit other things to and for Him, as it is the light that dispels the darkness.

**Case:** “Alas! I cannot get my heart freely to submit my lot to Him in that point.”

**Answer 1:** That submission will not be carried on in any without a struggle; the old man will never submit to it, and when the new man of grace is submitting to it, the old man will still be rebelling. “For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. And these are contrary, the one to the other, so that you cannot do the things that you would.” (Galatians 5:17). But are you sincerely desirous and habitually aiming to submit to it? From the ungracious struggle against the crook, turn away to the struggle with your own heart to bring it to submit, believing the promise, and using the means for it, being grieved from the heart with yourself that you cannot submit to it. This is submitting of your lot, in the favorable construction of the gospel (Romans 7:17-20, 2 Corinthians 8:12). If you had your choice, would you rather have your heart brought to submit to the crook, than the crook evened to your heart’s desire (Romans 7:22-23)? And do you not sincerely endeavor to submit, notwithstanding the reluctance of the flesh (Galatians 5:17)?

**Answer 2:** Where is the Christian self-denial and taking up the cross, without submitting to the crook? This is the first lesson Christ puts in the hands of His disciples. “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.” (Matthew 16:24). Self-denial would procure a reconciliation with the crook, and an admittance of the cross. But while we cannot bear our corrupt self to be

denied any of its cravings, and particularly that which God sees fit especially to be denied, we cannot bear the crook in our lot, but fight against it in favor of self.

**Answer 3:** Where is our conformity to Christ, while we cannot submit to the crook? We cannot evidence ourselves as Christians without conformity to Christ. “He that says he abides in Him, ought himself also to walk even as He walked.” (1 John 2:6). There was a continued crook in Christ’s lot, but He submitted to it. “And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” (Philippians 2:8). “For even Christ pleased not Himself.” (Romans 15:3). And so must we, if we will prove ourselves Christians indeed (Matthew 11:29, 2 Timothy 2:11-12).

**Answer 4:** How shall we prove ourselves the genuine children of God, if still warring with the crook? We cannot pray, “Our Father, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). 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 Corinthians 7:31). Though the work is sore, it may be the better endured knowing it will not be longsome; a few days or years at most will put an end to it, and take you off your trials. Do not despair, for if not eased before, you will be relieved at death, come what may after. A serious view of death and eternity might make us set ourselves to behave rightly under our crook while it lasts.

**Motive 5:** If you would, in a Christian manner, set yourselves to bear the crook, you would find it easier than you imagine. “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, and you shall find rest to your souls; for My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.” (Matthew 11:29-30). Satan has no readier way to gain his purpose than to persuade men it is impossible that ever their minds should comply with the crook; that it is a burden altogether insupportable. As long as you believe that, be sure you will never be able to bear it. But the Lord makes no crook in the lot of any, but what may be borne of them acceptably, though not sinlessly and perfectly (Matthew 11:30). For there is strength for that effect secured in the covenant (2 Corinthians 3:5, Philippians 4:13), and being by faith fetched, it will certainly come (Psalm 28:7).

**Motive 6:** If you behave Christianly under your crook here, you will not lose your labor, but get a full reward of grace in the other world, through Christ (2 Timothy 2:12, 1 Corinthians 15:58). There is a blessing pronounced on him that endures on this very ground, “Blessed is the man that endures temptation; for, when he is tried, he shall receive the crown, which the Lord has promised to them that love Him.” (James 1:12). Heaven is the place into which the approved, upon the trial of the crook, are received. “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” (Revelation 7:14). When you come there, no vestiges of it will be remaining in your lot, nor will you have the least uneasy remembrance of it; but it will accent your praises, and increase your joy.

**Motive 7:** If you do not behave Christianly under it, you will lose your souls in the other world (Jude 15-16). Those who are at war with God in their lot here, God will have war with them forever. If they will not submit to His yoke here, and go quietly under it, He will wreath His yoke about their neck forever, with everlasting bonds that shall never be loosed (Job 9:4). Therefore, set yourselves to behave rightly under the crook in your lot.

**Direction:** If you ask what way one may reach that, consider the following directions:

### **Proposition III.**

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

**I. What it is to consider the crook as the work of God.**

We take it up in these five things:

1. **First, An inquiry into the spring from where it rises (Genesis 25:22).** Reason and religion both teach us not only to notice the crook, which we cannot avoid, but to consider and inquire into the spring of it. Surely it is not our choice, nor do we designedly make it

for ourselves; and to ascribe it to fortune is to ascribe it to nothing. It is not sprung of itself but sown by one hand or another for us (Job 5:6). And we are to notice the hand from which it comes.

**2. Secondly, A perceiving of the hand of God in it.**

Whatever hand any creatures have in it, we ought not to terminate our view in them, but look above and beyond them to the supreme manager's agency (Job 1:21). Without this, we shall make a god of the creature that is instrumental of the crook, looking on it as if it were the first cause, which is peculiar to God (Romans 11:36), and bring ourselves under the doom, "Because they do not regard the works of the Lord, nor the operation of His hands, He shall destroy them, and not build them up" (Psalm 28:5).

**3. Thirdly, A representing it to ourselves as a work of God, which He has wrought against us for holy and wise ends, becoming the Divine perfections.**

This is to take it by the right handle, to represent it to ourselves under a right notion, from where a right management under it may spring. It can never be safe to overlook God in it, but very safe to overlook the creature; ascribing it to God, as if no other hand were in it, His being always the principal in it: "It is the Lord: let Him do what seems good to Him" (1 Samuel 3:18). Thus David overlooked Shimei, and looked to God in the matter of his cursing, as one fixing his eyes not on the axe, but on him that wielded it. Here two things are to come into our consideration:

1. **The decree of God, purposing that crook for us from eternity;** “for He works all things after the counsel of His own will” (Ephesians 1:11), the sealed book, in which are written all the black lines that made the crook. Whatever valleys of darkness, grief, and sorrow we are carried through, we are to look on them as made by the mountains of brass, the immovable Divine purposes (Zechariah 6:1). This can be no presumption in that case if we carry it no further than the event goes in our sight and feeling. For so far the book is opened for us to look into.
  
2. **The providence of God bringing to pass that crook for us in time (Amos 3:6).** There is nothing that can befall us without Him in whom we live. Whatever kind of agency of the creatures may be in the making of our crook, whatever they have done or not done towards it, He is the spring that sets all the created wheels in motion, which ceasing, they would all stop: though He is still infinitely pure in His agency, however impure they are in theirs. Job considered both these (Job 23:14).
  
4. **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 means. We are to be:
  1. **Habitually impressed with this consideration:** as the crook is some lasting grievance, so the consideration of this as the

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

**2. We are to be occasionally exercised in it.**

Whenever we begin to feel the smart of the crook, we should fetch in this remedy; when the yoke begins to 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.

- 5. Fifthly, A considering it for the end for which it is proposed to us, namely, to bring us to a dutiful carriage under it.** Men's corruptions will cause them to enter on the consideration of it; but as the principle is, so the end and effect of it will be, corrupt (2 Kings 6:33). 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**



## **behave rightly under the crook.**

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

- 1. First, Is it rational to think to set fallen man, with his corrupted nature, to work the same way with innocent Adam?** That is, to set beggars on a level with the rich, lame men to a journey with those that have limbs. Innocent Adam had a stock of gracious abilities, by which he might, by the force of moral considerations, have brought himself to perform duty aright. But where is that with us (2 Cor 3:5)? Whatever

force is in them to a soul endowed with spiritual life, what power have they to raise the dead, such as we are (Eph 2:1)?

**2. Secondly, The Scripture is very plain on this head, showing the indispensable necessity of faith (Hebrews 11); and that, such as unites to Christ, “Without Me,” that is, separate from Me, “you can do nothing” (John 15:6);** no, not with all the moral considerations you can use. How were the ten commandments given on Mount Sinai? Not as bare exactions of duty, but fronted with the Gospel, to be believed in the first place; “I am the Lord your God,” etc. And so Solomon, whom many regard rather as a moral philosopher than an inspired writer leading to Christ, fronts his writings, in the beginning of the Proverbs, with most express gospel. And must we have it expressly repeated in our Bibles with every moral precept, or else shut our eyes and take these precepts without it? That is the effect of our natural enmity to Christ. If we loved Him more, we should see Him more in every page and in every command, receiving the law at His mouth.

**3. Thirdly, Do but consider what it is to behave rightly under the crook in the lot;** what humiliation of soul, self-denial, and absolute resignation to the 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 of it; and try and see if it is not impossible for you to reach it without that faith before mentioned. I know a Christian may reach it

without full assurance. But still, according to the measure of their persuasion that God is their God, so will their attainments in it be; these keep equal pace. Oh! what kind of hearts do they imagine themselves to have, who think they can for a moment empty them of the creature further than they can fill them with God as their God in its room and stead? No doubt men may, from the force of moral considerations, work themselves to a behavior under the crook externally right, such as many pagans had; but a Christian disposition of spirit under it will never be reached without that faith in God.

**Objection: “Then it is saints only that are capable of the improvement of that consideration.”**

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

**III. I shall confirm that it is a proper means to bring one to behave rightly under it.**

This will appear, if we consider these four things:

- 1. It is of great use to divert from the considering and dwelling on those things about the crook**

**which serve to irritate our corruption.** Such are the balking of our will and wishes, the satisfaction we should have in the matter's going according to our mind, the instruments of the crook, how injurious they are to us, how unreasonable, how obstinate, etc. The dwelling on these considerations is but the blowing of the fire within; but to turn our eyes to it as the work of God would be a cure by way of diversion (2 Sam 6:9-10); and such diversion of the thoughts is not only lawful, but expedient and necessary.

2. **It has a moral aptitude for producing this good effect.** Though our cure is not compassed by the mere force of reason, yet it is carried on not by a brutal movement, but in a rational way (Eph 5:14). This consideration has a moral efficacy on our reason, it is fit to awe us into submission, and ministers a deal of argument for behaving Christianly under our crook. When we view the crook in our lot as the work of God, we are prompted to see it not merely as an affliction but as a divine dispensation designed for our good. This perspective can soften our spirits and lead us to a more patient and humble acceptance of our condition.
3. **It has a Divine appointment for that end, which is to be believed (Prov 3:6).** So the text. The creature in itself is an inefficacious and moveless thing, a mere vanity (Acts 17:28). That which makes anything a means fit for the end is a word of Divine appointment. To use anything then for an end, without the faith of this, is to make a god of the creature; therefore it is to be used in a dependence on God,

according to that word of appointment (1 Tim 4:4-5). And everything is fit for the end for which God has appointed it. This consideration is appointed for that end; and therefore is a fit means for it. Just as the rod is appointed for the child's correction, so is the crook in our lot appointed for our spiritual improvement, and thus, by faith, we ought to use it for the purpose God intends.

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 means of His own appointment.** Papists, legalists, and all superstitious persons devise various means of sanctification, seeming to have, or really having a moral fitness for the same; but they are quite ineffectual, because, like Abana, and Pharpar, they want a word of Divine appointment for curing us of our leprosy; therefore the Spirit works not by them, since they are not His instruments, but devised of their own hearts. And since even the means of Divine appointment are ineffectual without the Spirit, these can never be effectual. But this consideration having a Divine appointment, the Spirit works by it. Hence, when we consider the crook in our lot as the work of God, we may expect the Spirit to make it effectual for our sanctification, as He operates through the means which God has appointed for that very purpose. The Spirit's involvement ensures that this consideration is not merely an exercise of human reason but a channel of divine grace, bringing forth fruits of righteousness in those who thus apply it.

## **Use. Then take this direction for your behaving rightly under the crook in your lot.**

Inure yourselves to consider it as the work of God. And for helping you to improve it, so as it may be effectual, I offer these advices:

### **1. Consider it as the work of your God in Christ.**

This is the way to sprinkle it with Gospel-grace, and so to make it tolerable (Ps 22:1-3). 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 (Ps 142:4-5). (2) In all your encounters with it, resolutely to believe and claim your interest in Him (1 Sam 30:6). This consideration will transform your perspective, turning the crook into an occasion for experiencing the sweetness of divine grace and fatherly care.

### **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, etc., who, therefore, surely consults your good. Consider His holiness and justice, showing He does not wrong you; His mercy and goodness, that it is not worse; His sovereignty, that may silence you; His infinite wisdom and love, that may satisfy you in it. Reflecting on these divine relations and attributes will

help you see the crook as a well-designed instrument for your ultimate good, crafted by a wise and loving hand.

**3. Consider what a work of His it is.** Reflect on how it is a convincing work, for bringing sin to remembrance; a correcting work, to chastise you for your follies; a preventing work, to hedge you up from courses of sin you would otherwise be apt to run into; a trying work, to discover your state, your graces, and corruption; a weaning work, to wean you from the world and fit you for heaven. Each aspect of the crook serves a divine purpose, designed to purify, correct, and prepare you for glory. Embrace it as a necessary discipline from a loving Father who seeks your eternal welfare.

**4. In all your considerations of it in this manner look upward for His Spirit to render them effectual.** Thus may you behave Christianly under it, till God make it even either here or in heaven. The Spirit's work is indispensable; without His assistance, our best considerations will be fruitless. Therefore, in all your reflections, seek His aid to make them fruitful and transforming.

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

Could men once be brought to believe that it is better to have their minds bend to the crook in their lot, than to force the crook to their mind, they would be in a fair way to bring

their matters to a good account. Hear then the Divine decision in that case: “Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.” In which words:

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

2. Secondly, The decision made, in which the former is preferred to the latter; "Better it is to be of an humble

spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.” If these two parties were set before us, it were better to take our lot with those of a low condition, who have their spirits brought as low as their lot, than with those who, being of a proud and high spirit, have their lot brought up to their mind. A humble spirit is better than a heightened condition.

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

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, bad as the world is. The text expressly mentions them, and the Scripture elsewhere speaks of them (Ps 9:12, 10:12, Matt 5:3, Luke 6:20). 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 of heart.” (Matt 11:29). And for His honor, and the honor of His cross, they will never be

wanting while the world stands. “Whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son.” (Rom 8:29). His image lies in these two, suffering and holiness, of which lowliness is a chief part.

3. Nevertheless they are certainly very rare in the world. Agur observes, that there is another generation (“their eyes are lofty, and their eyelids lifted up,” Prov 30:13) quite opposite to them, and this makes the greatest company by far. The low and afflicted lot is not so very rare, but the lowly disposition of spirit is rarely yoked with it. Many a high spirit keeps up in spite of lowering circumstances.
4. They can be no more in number than the truly godly; for nothing less than the power of Divine grace can bring down men’s minds from their native height, and make their will pliant to the will of God (2 Cor 10:4-5). Men may put on a face of submission to a law and a crossed lot, because they cannot help it, and they see it is in vain to strive; but to bring the spirit truly to it, must be the effect of humbling grace.
5. Though all the godly are of that generation, yet there are some of them to whom that character more especially belongs. The way to heaven lies through tribulation to all (Acts 14:22); and all Christ’s followers are reconciled to it notwithstanding (Luke 14:26); yet there are some of them more remarkably disciplined than others, whose spirit is in this way humbled and brought down to their lot. “Surely I have behaved and

quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother; my soul is even as a weaned child.” (Ps 131:2). “For I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content with it. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.” (Phil 4:11-12).

6. A lowly disposition of soul, and habitual aim and bent of the heart that way, has a very favorable construction put upon it in heaven. Should we look for a generation perfectly purged of pride and risings of heart against their adverse lot at any time, we should find none in this world. But those who are sincerely aiming and endeavoring to reach it, and keep the way of contented submission, though sometimes blown aside and returning to it again, God accounts to be that lowly generation. (2 Cor 8:12, Jas 5:11).

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

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

(1) There is a yoke of affliction of one kind or another oftentimes upon them (Ps 73:14). God is frequently visiting them as a master does his scholars, and a physician his patients; whereas others are, in a sort, overlooked by Him (Rev 3:19). They are accustomed to the yoke, and that from

the time they enter into God's family (Ps 129:1-3), God sees it good for them. (Lam 3:27-28).

(2) There is a particular yoke of affliction which God has chosen for them, that hangs on them, and is seldom, if ever, taken off them (Luke 9:23). 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.

2. 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 12:11); what they can do (2 Cor 3:5); what they are worth (Gen 32:10), and what they deserve (Lam 3:22). Viewing themselves in the glass of the Divine law and perfection, they see themselves as a mass of imperfection and sinfulness. (Job 42:5-6).

**(2) They think highly and honorably of God (Ps 144:3).** They are taught by the Spirit what God is; and so entertain elevated thought of Him. They consider Him as the Sovereign of the world; His perfections as infinite; His work as perfect. They look on Him as the fountain of happiness, as a God in Christ, doing all things well; trusting His wisdom, goodness, and love, even where they cannot see. (Heb 11:8).

**(3) They think favorably of others, as far as in justice they may (Phil 2:3).** Though they cannot hinder themselves from seeing their glaring faults, yet they are ready withal to acknowledge their excellencies, and esteem them so far. And, because they see more into their own mercies and advantages for holiness, and misimproving of it, than they can see into others, they are apt to look on others as better than themselves, circumstances compared.

**(4) They are sunk down into a state of subordination to God and His will (Ps 131:1-2).** 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, Your will be done on earth, etc. They seek no more the command, but are content that God Himself sit at the helm of their affairs, and manage all for them. (Ps 47:4).

**(5) They are not bent on high things, but disposed to stoop to low things (Ps 131:1).** 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 glory. (2 Sam 15:25-26).

**(6) They are apt to magnify mercies bestowed on them (Gen 32:10).** Pride of heart overlooks and vilifies mercies one is possessed of, and fixes the eye on what is wanting in one's condition, making one like the flies, which pass over the sound places, and swarm together on the sore. On the contrary, lowliness teaches men to recount the mercies they enjoy in the lowest condition, and to set a

mark on the good things they have possessed, or yet do (Job 2:10).

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

**(1) They submit to it as just.** “I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him.” (Mic 7:9). There are no hardships in our condition, but we have procured them to ourselves; and it is therefore just that we kiss the rod, and be silent under it, and so lower our spirits to our lot. If they complain, it is of themselves; their hearts do not rise up against the Lord, far less do they open their mouth against the heavens. They justify God, and condemn themselves, reverencing His holiness and spotless righteousness in His proceedings against them.

**(2) They go quietly under it as tolerable.** “It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sits alone, and keeps silence, because he has borne it on him; he puts his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope.” (Lam 3:26-29). While the unsubdued spirit rages under the yoke as a bull unaccustomed to it, the spirit brought to the lot goes softly under it. They see it is of the Lord’s mercies that it is not worse; they take up the naked cross, as God lays it down, without those overweights on it that turbulent passions add to them; and so it becomes really more easy than they thought it could have been, like a burden fitted on the back.

**(3) They are satisfied in it**, as drawing their comfort from another quarter than their outward condition, even as the house stands fast when the prop is taken away that it did not lean on. “Although the fig-tree should not blossom, neither fruit is in the vine, – yet I will rejoice in the Lord.” (Hab 3:17-18). Thus did David in the day of his distress. “He encouraged himself in the Lord his God.” (1 Sam 30:6). It is an argument of a spirit not brought down to the hardships of it, as if their condition in the world were the point on which their happiness turned. It is want of mortification that makes men’s comfort to wax and wane, ebb and flow, according to the various appearances of their lot in the world.

**(4) They have a complacency in it**, as that which is fit and good for them (Isa 39:8, 2 Cor 12:10). 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 ministered by their heavenly Father. So they reach a holy complacency in their low afflicted lot. The lowly spirit extracts this sweet out of the bitterness of his lot, considering how the Lord, by means of that afflicting lot, stops the provision for unruly lusts, that they may be starved; how He cuts off the by-channels, that the whole stream of the soul’s love may run towards Himself; how He pulls off and holds off the man’s burden and clog of earthly comforts, that he may run the more expeditiously in the way to heaven.



**(5) They rest in it**, as what they desire not to come out of, till the God that brought them into it see it fit to bring them out with His good will (Isa 28:16). 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 moving for a change, till the heaven's moving brings it about. So this does not hinder prayer and the use of appointed means, with dependence on the Lord, but requires faith, hope, patience, and resignation (2 Sam 15:25-26).

## **II. The Generation of the Proud Getting Their Will and Carrying All to Their Mind**

We shall now consider the generation of the proud who get their will and have all things conform to their desires. Three notable characteristics mark their condition.

### **1. First, There Are Crosses in Their Lot.**

They too face trials allotted to them by the overruling providence, regardless of their circumstances in the world. For, consider:

(1) The confusion and vanity brought into creation by man's sin ensure that no one can traverse this world without encountering trials (Eccl 1:14). Sin has transformed the world from a paradise into a thicket, making it impossible to navigate without encountering obstacles. As midges in

summer afflict those in splendid attire as well as those in humble garb, so do crosses meet both the high and the low.

(2) The pride of their heart particularly exposes them to crosses. A proud heart will manufacture a cross where a lowly soul would find none (Esth 5:13). It magnifies the weight of real crosses tenfold. The proud are like nettles and thorn hedges, catching every passing irritation while lowly souls are often bypassed by such troubles. Thus, none are more exposed to crosses than the proud, though none are so ill-prepared to bear them.

## **2. Secondly, Reigning Pride in Their Spirit.**

Their spirits have never been subdued by genuine humility; they remain elevated by the corruption of their nature. Thus, they cannot bear the yoke that God lays upon them. The neck, swollen with pride and passion, finds no ease when the yoke touches it. We may view the case of the proud in three aspects:

(1) They overvalue themselves, and thus will not stoop to the yoke; it is beneath them. Such swelling vanity is evident in Pharaoh's question, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?" (Exod 5:2). Genuine humility is necessary to bear any yoke, whether it be Christ's precepts or providence. The first error lies in their understanding, leading Solomon to often call a wicked man a fool. Conversion begins with conviction to humble the heart, for men see themselves as greater than they are. Consequently, God's reality cannot satisfy them.

(2) They possess an unmortified self-will arising from their inflated self-importance, and thus they refuse to yield (Exod 5:2). The question between heaven and us is whether God's will or our own shall prevail. Our will is corrupt while God's is holy; they are inherently incompatible. God asserts that His will must prevail, but self-will remains obstinate until broken (Rom 6:7, Isa 48:4).

(3) They harbor a multitude of unsubdued passions that ally with self-will. These passions insist that self-will must not be subdued (Rom 7:8-9), igniting internal and external conflicts (Jas 4:1).

A holy God opposes the self-will of proud creatures through His providence, often contravening their desires, either by His direct hand, as with Cain (Gen 4:4-5), or through human agents, as with Ahab and Naboth's vineyard (1 Kgs 21:4). The proud heart, unable to submit to crosses or to bear being controlled, rises against these adversities, marshaling the full force of its unmortified passions to remove the cross and align circumstances with its desires. This conflict manifests in two fronts:

a) **Upward, Against Heaven:** Discontent, impatience, murmuring, and fretting arise, as seen in Proverbs 19:3, where man's folly perverts his way and his heart frets against the Lord. These passions darken the countenance (Gen 4:5), and issue volleys of complaints or even blasphemies (2 Kgs 6:33).

b) **Forward, Against the Instruments of the Cross:** Anger, wrath, fury, and revenge target the perceived sources of their afflictions (Prov 27:4). These emotions disrupt self-

control (Luke 21:19), fill the heart with rage (Ps 29:3), and the mouth with clamor and threats (Eph 4:31, Acts 9:1), potentially leading to violent actions (Matt 5:21-22), as seen with Ahab's response to Naboth.

Despite their efforts, the proud often fail to remove their crosses, sometimes resulting in their own ruin (Exod 15:19-20). However, in our text, we consider them as:

### **3. Thirdly, Getting Their Will and Carrying All to Their Mind.**

This condition includes:

#### **(1) Holy Providence Yielding to Their Will:**

Sometimes God permits the proud to follow their own desires (Gen 6:3). He sees that their struggles do not yield good, so He lets them follow their course unchecked (Isa 1:5), allowing them to pursue their inclinations unhindered, as with Ephraim (Hos 4:17).

**(2) Lust Remaining Unchecked:** Their desires remain strong and unrestrained (Ps 78:30). Unlike those who find contentment through mortification, the proud feed their cravings, remaining entrenched in their desires.

**(3) The Cross Removed:** The yoke is taken off (Ps 78:29). They refuse to adjust their minds to their circumstances, and instead, circumstances are bent to their will, giving them a sense of triumph (1 Kgs 21:18-19).

**(4) Satisfaction in Their Triumph:** They relish their victory, much like those dividing the spoils after a battle (1

Kgs 21:18-19).

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 the spirit humbled and brought down to the lot, than to be of a proud and high spirit, getting the lot brought up to it, and matters going according to one's mind. This will appear from the following considerations.

#### **1. Humility is Preferable to Pride, Regardless of Circumstances.**

Humility remains superior to pride, irrespective of the external conditions. Even if afflictions attend the humble and prosperity accompanies the proud, humility is like gold amidst dross, while pride, despite its splendor, is akin to lead in a treasure chest.

#### **(1) Humility Reflects the Image of God, While Pride Mirrors the Devil.**

Humility is a part of the divine image. Pride is the masterwork of the devil's image. Behold Him who was the express image of the Father's person, and see Him meek and lowly in heart (Matt 11:29). None suffered more

affliction, yet His spirit was perfectly brought down to His lot. “He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth.” (Isa 53:7). This is a radiant part of the divine image; for though God cannot be low in respect of His state and condition, yet He is of infinite condescension (Isa 57:15). None bears or suffers with such patience as He (Rom 2:4), a trait that shone brightly in Christ. “For consider Him that endures such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be wearied, and faint in your minds.” (Heb 12:3).

Conversely, pride is the very image of the devil (1 Tim 3:6). Shall we value ourselves on the height of our spirits? Satan exceeds the proudest among us in this regard. Though he is the most miserable, he is the proudest in the whole creation. There is an immense gulf between his spirit and his lot; the former aspires to the throne of God, the latter is consigned to hell. His spirit will never reconcile with his lot, leading to perpetual war within him. He finds no rest, roaming incessantly, seeking rest but finding none.

Is it not better to resemble God than the devil? To be like the fountain of all good, rather than the source of all evil? Can anything possibly tip the scales in favor of pride? “Better it is to be of a humble spirit with the lowly,” etc.

## **(2) Humility Qualifies Us for Communion with God in Christ.**

Pride makes God our enemy (1 Pet 5:5). Our happiness hinges on friendly communion with heaven. Without it, nothing can compensate for the loss (Ps 30:5). With it, nothing can render us miserable. “If God is for us, who can

be against us?” (Rom 8:31). God favors the humble and lowly, those who, being in Christ, are made like Him. He blesses them and declares them heirs of the kingdom: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt 5:3). He regards them, irrespective of their lowly condition (Isa 66:2), and respects them despite their being despised by others. “Though the Lord is high, yet He has respect to the lowly: but the proud He knows afar off.” (Ps 138:6). He will dwell with them, even in their humble abodes (Isa 57:15), and exalt them in due time (Isa 40:4).

Conversely, God opposes and curses the proud (Jer 17:5), and His curse will ultimately prevail. The proud man is a rival to God, making himself his own god and demanding the same from others. He rages and blusters when not revered, but God will bring him low (Isa 40:4, Ps 18:27).

Is it not better to be fit for communion with God than to have Him as an adversary?

### **(3) Humility Pleases God, Pride Pleases the Devil.**

God commands us to be humble, especially under affliction, “and be clothed with humility.” (1 Pet 5:5-6). The humble publican was accepted, while the proud Pharisee was rejected. The generation of the proud faces divine wrath (1 Thess 2:10), pleasing neither God nor men, only themselves and Satan. Duty is preferable to sin in every circumstance.

## **2. The Humble Enjoy Peace of Mind, the Proud Face Constant Turmoil.**

Consider the blessing of inner peace and repose. Nothing external can render life truly happy without it (Dan 5:6), and nothing can make life miserable if it is present (John 16:33). The spirit brought low to match the lot ensures this tranquility. Our troubles stem from the discord between our mind and our lot; align the mind with the lot, and the tumult ceases. Maintaining this disposition brings ease in affliction, like a rock unmoved by crashing waves: “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which you are called.” (Col 3:15).

Conversely, the proud endure immense turmoil before aligning their lot with their desires. “They have taught their tongues to speak lies, and they weary themselves to commit iniquity.” (Jer 9:5). “You lust, and have not: you kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: you fight and war, yet you have not.” (Jas 4:2). Their hearts are pierced with grief, anxiety, and vexation. Contradictory passions and outbursts of temper leave them in constant unease. Haman’s bitterness over Mordecai illustrates the discontent of a proud spirit.

Even when they achieve their desires, the satisfaction falls short of the pain endured in pursuit. Rachel’s longing for children and the eventual disappointment reflect this truth. Hasty acquisition of providence’s gifts often leaves a bitter aftertaste, like manna that spoils overnight (Exod 16:20). Their hold on these gains is tenuous; they may lose them quickly or be removed from them, as seen with Haman.

### **3. Humble Spirits Gain Greater Rewards than the Proud.**



Those who bring their spirits low gain more valuable rewards than those who elevate their lot through pride. “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that rules his spirit, than he that takes a city.” (Prov 16:32).

**(1) Improving One’s Character Outweighs Improving One’s Circumstances.**

Enhancing oneself is more valuable than improving external conditions. The life is more than meat, and the man more valuable than his surroundings. Improving oneself surpasses merely improving one’s condition. When two are sick, one moving to a finer bed but remaining ill is worse off than the one who, though in a coarse bed, is cured.

**(2) Mastering One’s Passions is Superior to Conquering the World.**

Subduing personal passions is greater than bending the world to one’s will, for it makes one master of oneself (Luke 21:19). In contrast, those who conquer external challenges but fail to master their inner selves remain slaves to their worst impulses (Rom 6:16). Mastery over oneself offers safety amidst any storm, whereas external conquests leave one vulnerable. “He that has no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.” (Prov 25:28).

**(3) God Will Judge and Reward Right Conduct.**

When judged, those who bring their spirit to their lot will be found to have multiplied good works, while the proud who

forced their lot to their will multiply ill works. Every internal action counts before the omniscient God (Rom 2:16). Affliction, well-managed, is fruitful, exercising Christian graces otherwise dormant. Acts of resignation and trust in God will be recorded as good works (Mal 3:16).

Conversely, every rebellion against the lot, every faithless attempt to change it, is an ill work before God. The proud who divide the spoil will find their tally of ill works multiplied, while the humble, enduring their lot, will find their good works counted abundantly.

## **Use 1. Of Information. Hence We May Learn:**

### **1. It is Not Always Best for Folks to Get Their Will.**

Many cannot be pleased with God's will concerning them and instead get their own will to their detriment. "Israel would have none of Me, so I gave them up to their own hearts' lusts, and they walked in their own counsels." (Ps 81:11-12). It may be most pleasant and gratifying for the moment, but it is not the safest. Let people beware of priding themselves in achieving their desires through force; let them not triumph in such victories. The after-reckoning will open their eyes, revealing the folly and danger of their ways.

### **2. The Afflicted, Crossed Party Whose Lot is Kept Low Gains Rather Than Loses, if Their Spirit is Brought Down to It.**

If one sees things through the light of God's unerring Word, they are in a better state than if all had gone according to their desires. In yielding to God's will, the vessels of mercy are fitted for glory, while those who achieve their own will by force are fitted for destruction (Ps 78:29-31). Thus, God disciplines His own to prepare them for glory (Lam 3:27).

### **3. It is Better to Yield to Providence Than to Fight It Out, Even if We Win.**

Yielding to the sovereign disposal is both our duty and in our best interest. Taking this route, we act most honorably; for what honor can there be in the creature disputing with his Creator? We act most wisely, for whatever the success of some battles may be, victory will ultimately be on heaven's side. "For by strength shall no man prevail." (1 Sam 2:9).

### **4. It is of Greater Concern to Have Our Spirits Brought Down Than to Have Our Outward Condition Raised.**

Who believes this? All men strive to raise their outward condition; most never mind bringing down their spirits, and few apply themselves to this end. This is akin to ministering drink to a thirsty sick person but never seeking a cure for their underlying illness.

## **Use 2. Of Exhortation.**

As you meet with crosses in your lot in the world, let your desire be to have your spirit humbled and brought down rather than to have the cross removed. I do not mean that

you should not use all lawful means for the removal of your cross, in dependence on God; but be more concerned to get your spirit to bow and yield than to even out the crook in your lot.

**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; humbling is necessary for the profit of our souls, to purify them and bring them into a state of health and cure.

**Motive 2. The Humbling of the Spirit Will Have a Mighty Good Effect on a Crossed Lot, but the Removal of the Cross Will Have None on the Unhumbled Spirit.**

Humbling lightens the cross mightily for the time (Matt 11:30), and in due time carries it off cleanly (1 Pet 5:6). The removal of the cross, however, is not a means to humble the unhumbled; though it may prevent irritation, the disease remains.

**Motive 3. Consider How Dangerous and Hopeless It Is to Have the Cross Removed Before the Spirit is Humbled.**

To have the means of cure taken away while the disease's power remains unbroken is a perilous state. It is akin to being removed from trials before proving oneself, resulting in being given over by our Physician as hopeless (Isa 1:5, Hos 4:17). Therefore, seek not merely the removal of the

cross but the humbling of your spirit under it, ensuring a true and lasting cure.

### **Use 3. For Direction.**

Believing the Gospel, take God for your God in Christ towards your eternal salvation, and then dwell much on the thoughts of God's greatness and holiness, and of your own sinfulness; so will you be humbled under the mighty hand of God; and in due time He will lift you up (1 Pet 5:6).

"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." (1 Pet 5:6).

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

**1. The Duty We Are to Study: "Humble Yourselves Therefore Under the Mighty Hand of God, That He May Exalt You in Due Time."**

**(1) The State of Those to Whom It Is Proposed:**  
Those under the mighty hand of God whom His hand

has humbled or brought low in respect of their circumstances in the world. And by these, I think, are meant, not only such as are under particular signal afflictions, which is the lot of some, but also those who, by the providence of God, are in any kind of way lowered, which is the lot of all. All being in a state of submission or dependence on others, God has made this life a state of trial; and for that cause, He has, by His mighty hand, subjected men one to another, as wives, children, servants, to husbands, parents, masters; and these again to their superiors; among whom, again, even the highest depend on those under them, as magistrates and ministers on the people, even the supreme magistrate. This state of the world God has made for the trial of men in their several stations and dependence on others; and therefore, when the time of trial is over, it also comes to an end. “Then comes the end, when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.” (1 Cor 15:24-25). Meantime, while it lasts, it makes humility necessary to all, to prompt them to the duty they owe their superiors, to whom God’s mighty hand has subjected them.

**(2) The Duty Itself:** Namely, the humiliation of our spirits under the humbling circumstances the Lord has placed us in. “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.” Whether we are under particular afflictions, which have cast us down from the height we were sometime in, or whether we are only inferiors in one or more relations, or whether, which is most common,

both these are in our case, we must in this eye the mighty hand of God, as that which places us there, and is over us, there to hold us down in it; and so, with an awful regard to it, bow down under it, in the temper and disposition of our spirits, suiting our spirits to our lot, and careful of performing the duty of our low sphere.

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

## **2. 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 9:2, 1 John 2:19). So here, the meaning is not, Humble yourselves, on design He may exalt you; but, and it shall issue in His exalting you. (Jas 4:10).

**(1) Here Is a Happy Event of Humiliation of Spirit Secured:** That is, exaltation or lifting up on high, by the power of God, that He may exalt you.

Exalting will as surely follow on the humiliation of spirit, suitable to the low lot, as the morning follows the night, or the sun rises after the dawning. And these words are fitted to obviate the objections that the world and our corrupt hearts are apt to make against bringing down the spirit to the low lot.

**Objection 1:** If we let our spirit fall, we shall lie always at folks' feet, and they will trample on us.

**Answer:** No; the pride of spirit unsubdued will bring men to lie at the feet of others forever (Isa 66:24). But the humiliation of spirit will bring them undoubtedly out from under their feet (Mal 4:2-3). Those who humble themselves now will be exalted forever; they will be brought out of their low situation and circumstances. Cast yourselves down even with your low lot, and assure yourselves you shall not lie there.

**Objection 2:** If we do not raise ourselves, none will raise us, and therefore we must see to ourselves to do ourselves right.

**Answer:** That is wrong. Humble yourselves in respect of your spirits, and God will raise you up in respect of your lot or low condition; and those who 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.



**Objection 3:** But surely we shall never rise high if we let our spirits fall.

**Answer:** This is wrong too: God will not only raise the 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, “In due season we shall reap, if we do not faint.” (Gal 6:9). We are apt to weary in humbling, trying circumstances, and would instantly have up our head (John 7:6). But Solomon observes, There is a time for everything when it does best, and the wise will wait for it (Eccl 3). There is a time too for exalting those who 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 will come too soon should it come before that time.

## **Doctrine I.**

### **The Bent of One’s Heart in Humbling Circumstances**

The bent of one's heart, in humbling circumstances, should lie towards a suitable humbling of the spirit, as under God's mighty hand placing us in them.

We shall consider,

## **I. What Things Are Supposed in This.**

It supposes that:

### **1. God Brings Men into Humbling Circumstances.**

“And all the trees of the field shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree.” (Ezek 17:24). There is a root of pride in the hearts of all men on earth, that must be mortified before they can be suitable 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 not. And God brings them into humbling circumstances for that very end. “The Lord your God led you these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you, and to prove you, to know what was in your heart.” (Deut 8:2).

### **2. These Circumstances Press as a Weight on the Heart Tending to Bear It Down.**

“Therefore he brought down their hearts with labor.” (Ps 107:12). They strike at the grain of the heart and cross the natural inclination: whence a trial arises, whether, when God lays on His mighty hand, the man can yield under it or not; and consequently, whether he is suitable 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. “They cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty. But none says, Where is God my maker?” (Job 35:9-10). This is the first gate the heart turns to in humbling circumstances, and in this way the unsubdued spirit holds on.
  
4. **But What God Requires Is, Rather to Labor to Bring Down the Heart than to Get Up the Head (Jas 4:10).** Here lies the proof of one’s suitability for heaven; and then is one in the way heavenward, when he is more concerned to get down his heart than to get up his head, to go calmly under his burden than to get it off, to bow under the mighty hand than to put it off him.
  
5. **There Must Be a Noticing of the Hand of God in Humbling Circumstances.** “Hear the rod, and Him who has appointed it.” (Mic 6:9). There is an abjectness of spirit, by which 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, by which 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 some times to serve their own turn (Acts 12:22). These are men-pleasers (Eph 6:6 with Gal 1:10).

## II. What Are Those Humbling Circumstances the Mighty Hand of God Brings Men Into

Supposing here what was before taught concerning the crook in the lot being of God's making, these are the circumstances:

1. **Circumstances of Imperfection.** God has placed all men in such circumstances under a variety of wants and imperfections (Phil 3:12). We can look nowhere 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. **Circumstances of Inferiority in Relations.** By these, men are set in the lower place in relations and society, and made to depend on others (1 Cor 7:24). 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 11:7). And therefore reverence of them, consisting in an awful regard to that ray of the Divine image shining in them, is necessarily required (Eph 5:33, Heb 12:9, compare Ps 111:9). The same holds in all other relations and superiorities, namely, that they

are so far in the place of God to their relatives (Ps 32:6), and though the parties are worthless in themselves, that does not release one from the debt due to them (Acts 23:4-5, Rom 13:7). 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 of God takes of us in that matter and 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 13:2), because it is mediately on us for that effect, though it is a man's hand that is immediately on us.

**3. Circumstances 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 12:3). 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 are just or unjust, God tries men with them to humble them, to 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 bull 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. Circumstances of Affliction (Prov 16:19).**

Prosperity puffs up sinners with pride; for it is very 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 gay feathers in which they prided themselves, rubs the paint and varnish from off the creature, by which 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 attempt to rise up when God is casting and holding us down; and cannot fail, if continued in, to provoke the Lord to break us in pieces (Ezek 24:13). For the afflicting hand of God is mighty.

**5. Circumstances of Sin, as the Punishment of Sin.**

We may allude to that (Job 30:19). 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 willfully 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 overruled 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.

## **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 God's Mighty Hand.** Recognize that God's mighty hand is employed in bringing about everything that concerns us, whether by direct action or by permission. "And he said, It is the Lord; let him do what seems him good." (1 Sam 3:18). "And the king said, The Lord has said to him, Curse David: who shall then say, Wherefore have you done so?" (2 Sam 16:10). While God is the fountain of all perfection, our imperfections must be traced back to His sovereign will. It is He who places us in our relations by His providence, without whom we would not face such contradictions, for "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turns it wherever He pleases." (Prov 21:1). He sends afflictions and justly punishes one sin with another (Isa 6:10).
  
2. **A Sense of Our Own Worthlessness and Nothingness.** We must cultivate a sense of our own worthlessness and nothingness before God (Ps 144:3).

Gazing upon the infinite majesty of the mighty hand dealing with us, we should echo Abraham's words, "Behold, I am but dust and ashes;" (Gen 18:27) and agree with the cry, "All flesh is grass." (Isa 40:6). Holding onto thoughts of our own excellency under God's mighty hand only swells the heart with pride, causing it to rise against Him. Letting these thoughts fall before His glory is the humbling required.

3. **A Sense of Our Guilt and Filthiness.** Recognize that the mighty hand presses us down because we are sinners. It is fitting then to see our sinfulness under it; our guilt, making us appear as criminals justly punished; and our filthiness, leading us to loathe ourselves. We should understand that nothing lowers us more than we deserve. Overlooking our sinfulness allows the proud heart to swell (Rom 3:10, Isa 64:6).
4. **Silent Submission Under God's Hand.** God's sovereignty demands our silent submission. "Nay but, O man, who are you that replies against God?" (Rom 9:20). Only unsubdued pride of spirit can allow us to answer back under His sovereign hand. A view of His sovereignty humbled and awed the Psalmist into submission, leading him to say, "I was dumb, I did not open my mouth, because You did it." (Ps 39:9). Similarly, Job responded, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job 1:21). Eli said, "It is the Lord; let Him do what pleases Him." (1 Sam 3:18).



5. **Magnifying His Mercies.** Even in the midst of all His proceedings against us, we should magnify His mercies towards us (Ps 144:3). If He has laid us low, true humility will make us wonder why He has not laid us lower (Ezra 9:13). No matter how low we are laid, we will see we are not as low as our sins deserve (Lam 3:22).
6. **Holy Admiration of God's Ways.** Humility involves a holy and silent admiration of God's ways and counsels, recognizing them as unsearchable (Rom 11:33). Pride thinks nothing is too high for man and thus presumes to judge and condemn Divine proceedings. Humility, on the other hand, disposes a man to think awfully and honorably of the mysteries of Providence that he cannot comprehend.
7. **Laying Aside All Personal Dignity.** Before the Lord, we must forget and lay aside all our dignity that makes us excel others (Rev 4:10). Pride feeds on personal excellency and dignity, practicing it before others and not forgetting it before God. But true humility makes all personal excellency vanish before Him, laying the man lower than any in his own eyes. "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man." (Prov 30:2).
8. **Readily Submitting to the Meanest Offices.** Humility requires a readiness to submit to the meanest tasks that our circumstances require. Pride always finds something beneath us, measuring by our own will and mind, not by God's placement. Humility measures

by the circumstances God places us in and willingly accepts what is required. Jesus exemplified this by humbling Himself to the point of death (Phil 2:8). "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet." (John 13:14).

## **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.** Observe every detail of your life that humbles you: your imperfections, your inferior positions in relationships, the contradictions you face, your afflictions, the uncertainty of all things around you, and your sinfulness. Examine these circumstances deliberately, considering how Providence has led you to this point. This self-awareness will help you understand your true state and keep you from being blind to your real condition.
- 2. Align Your Spirit to Your Circumstances.** Reflect on what your circumstances demand of you, striving to humble your spirit accordingly. Aim to make your spirit as low as your condition, acknowledging God's mighty hand in your life. Let this be your constant endeavor throughout your life, focusing on it daily.

### **Motives for Humbling Your Spirit**

- 1. God Is Actively Humbling Us All.** Regardless of how high some may be in this world, Providence has placed humbling badges on everyone, whether they recognize them or not (Isa 40:6). Our duty is to align with God's intention of humbling us, ensuring that we do not resist His humbling work in vain.
- 2. Our Agency Is Necessary for Humility.** While God works to humble us, we must actively participate in this process (Phil 2:12-13). God can lower our outward circumstances, but our spirit must voluntarily submit. Therefore, cooperate with God's humbling efforts, like sailors adjusting their sails to catch the wind.
- 3. Resisting God's Hand Is Sinful and Futile.** If we do not yield, we resist God's mighty hand (Acts 7:51). This resistance is sinful rebellion against our sovereign Lord (Isa 14:9). Furthermore, it is folly to fight against God. The struggle can only end in our defeat (Job 9:4). All must bow or break under His hand.
- 4. Now Is the Time for Humiliation.** This life is our time for humbling ourselves, just as spring is for planting (1 Pet 3:4, 1 Pet 5:5). Humbling our spirits is valuable in God's sight, and though it is challenging and requires continuous effort, it is necessary (Luke 6:48). The whole of life is appointed for this purpose (Deut 8:2, Heb 12:2). There will be no opportunity for true humility after this life (Rev 22:11). Therefore, embrace this time for humbling.

- 5. Humbling Circumstances Can Yield Great Gain.** By humbling our spirits, we can turn adverse circumstances to our benefit (Ps 119:71). Humility itself is precious and brings many advantages, including ease under the cross (Matt 11:30, Lam 3:27-29), acceptance by God (Ps 51:17), and divine favor (Isa 66:2). It also imparts wisdom for our conduct (Prov 11:2).
- 6. Recognize the Mighty Hand at Work.** God's mighty hand is at work with us, and we should bend our spirits to comply with it rather than resist it. We must inevitably fall under His hand (Isa 46:10, Ps 46:4), and those who humbly submit will be raised up in due time (Jas 4:10).

## **Directions For Reaching This Humiliation**

### **1. General Directions**

#### **Direction 1. Seek Spiritual Improvement from Providence**

Fix it in your heart to seek some spiritual improvement from the conduct of Providence towards you (Mic 6:9). Until your heart is set on this goal, true humiliation cannot be expected (Hos 14:9). It is only reasonable, whether acting as men or Christians, to aim at turning what is grievous to the flesh into profit for the spirit. If

we are losers on one hand, we must strive to be gainers on the other.

### **Direction 2. Secure Your Eternal Salvation**

Settle the matter of your eternal salvation first by going to Christ and taking God as your God in Him, according to the Gospel offer (Hos 2:19, Heb 8:10). Let your humbling circumstances drive you to this, so that while earthly comforts dry up, you may turn to the Fountain of living waters. It is impossible to achieve true humility under God's mighty hand without faith in Him as your God and friend (Heb 11:6, 1 John 4:19).

### **Direction 3. Use the Means of Soul-Humbling in Faith**

Use the means of soul-humbling in the faith of the promise (Ps 28:7). Moses, by striking the rock in faith of the promise, made water gush out; similarly, we must deal with our rocky hearts by laying them on the soft bed of the Gospel and striking them there (Joel 2:13). Otherwise, they will never break or fall in true humiliation.

## **2. Particular Directions**

### **Direction 1. Assurance of God's Support**

Assure yourselves that no circumstances you face are so humbling that you cannot acceptably bring your heart

down to them. "God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able; but with the temptation will also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor 10:13). This truth should persuade you that God's grace is sufficient, and His strength is made perfect in your weakness (2 Cor 12:9). Believe this with personal application: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil 4:13). God allows you to hold this hope, whatever your weakness and the difficulty of your task. "He who plows should plow in hope; and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope" (1 Cor 9:10). The belief of this is part of the life of faith (2 Tim 2:1). Without hope of success, your endeavors will be heartless and in vain. "Therefore lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees" (Heb 12:12).

### **Direction 2. Recognize God's Hand in Your Circumstances**

Whatever hand is, or is not, in your humbling circumstances, take God as your primary agent and see yourselves under His mighty hand (Mic 6:9). People often overlook God in their humbling circumstances and fixate on the human instruments, leading their hearts to rise in pride instead of bowing in humility. Instead, focus on God as your true opponent, remembering the battle and sinning no more (Job 12:8).

### **Direction 3. Contemplate God's Infinite Greatness**

Be much in the thoughts of God's infinite greatness, considering His holiness and majesty to awe you into the deepest humiliation (Isa 6:3-5). Job faced many humbling providences but was not sufficiently humbled until God revealed His infinite majesty to him. Despite his friends' arguments, Job stood firm until God addressed him directly, starting with thunder (Job 38:1-2), followed by His voice from the whirlwind (38:1), which finally humbled Job (40:4-5) until he repented in dust and ashes (42:5-6).

#### **Direction 4. Embrace the Mysteries of Providence**

Make it your habit to silently accept the mysteries in God's conduct towards you, which you cannot comprehend but can adore. "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!" (Rom 11:33). God's first rebuke to Job was, "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" (Job 38:2). This cut Job to the heart, leading him to acknowledge it again (Job 42:3). Even in the most perplexing providences, sovereignty should silence us, and His infinite wisdom should satisfy us, even when we cannot see the full picture.

#### **Direction 5. Reflect on Your Sinfulness**

Be much in the thoughts of your own sinfulness. "Behold, I am vile. What shall I answer You? I will lay my hand on my mouth" (Job 40:4). Overlooking our

sinfulness causes us to resist humbling circumstances. When our eyes are opened to our sin, our hearts will be humbled. Therefore, whenever God humbles you, turn your eyes to your sinfulness, which will aid in your humiliation.

### **Direction 6. Recognize the Need for Humbling Circumstances**

Settle it in your heart that all the humbling circumstances you face are necessary. "Though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations" (1 Pet 1:6). God does not bring unnecessary trials but afflicts as needed: "For He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men" (Lam 3:33). Unlike earthly fathers who correct for their own pleasure, God corrects us for our profit, to make us partakers of His holiness (Heb 12:10). Reflect on your heart's natural tendency to pride, forgetfulness of God, and susceptibility to worldly vanities. You will see the need for humbling circumstances. If you cannot see this need, trust in God's infinite wisdom.

### **Direction 7. Trust in God's Kind Design**

Believe that God's providence has a kind design for you, even in humbling circumstances. God calls us to this belief, which opens our hearts under such circumstances (Rev 3:19). Satan suggests suspicions to the contrary, which harden our hearts: "This evil is of the Lord; why should I wait for the Lord any longer?" (2 Kgs 6:33). As long as we suspect ill intent, we will



harden ourselves in defense and sorrow. But faith in God's kind design will open our hearts in humility before Him.

In conclusion, let us follow these directions diligently, allowing God's mighty hand to humble us as we submit willingly to His divine providence. By doing so, we will find true peace and spiritual growth, even in the midst of humbling circumstances.

### **Case.**

“Oh, 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 in it.”

### **Answer:**

Now, what word of God, or discovery from heaven, have you to ground these fears on? None at all but from hell (1 Cor 10:13). What do you think the design towards you in the Gospel is? Can you believe no kind design in all the words of grace there heaped up? What is that, I pray, but black unbelief in its hue of hell (Isa 4:1), flying in the face of the truth of God, and making Him a liar (1 John 5:10-11). The Gospel is a breathing of love and good-will to the world of mankind sinners (Titus 2:11, 3:4, 1 John 4:14, John 3:17). But you do not believe it, in that case, more than devils believe it. If you can believe a kind design there, you must believe it in your humbling circumstances too; for the design of

Providence cannot be contrary to the design of the Gospel; but contrariwise, the latter is to help forward to the other.

## **8. Life as a Time of Trial for Heaven**

Think with yourselves, that this life is the time of trial for heaven. “Blessed is the man that endures temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love Him.” (Jas 1:12). Therefore, we should welcome humbling circumstances in that view, “Count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations.” (Jas 1:2). If there is an honorable office or beneficial employment to be bestowed, men strive to be taken on trial for it, in hope they may be in this way legally admitted to it. Now God takes trial of men for heaven by humbling circumstances, as the whole Bible teaches; and shall men be so very loath to stoop to them? I would ask you,

- 1. Is it nothing to you to stand a candidate for glory, to be put on trial for heaven?** Is there not an honor in it, an honor which all the saints have had? “Behold, we count them happy that endure,” etc. (Jas 5:11). And a fair prospect in it? “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” (2 Cor 4:17). Do but put the case, that God should overlook you in that case, as one whom it is needless ever to try on that head; that

He should order you 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 future glory!** Your most humbling circumstances, how light are they in comparison of the weight of it! The longest continuance of them is but for a moment, compared with that eternal weight. Alas! There is much unbelief at the root of all our uneasiness under humbling circumstances. Had we a clearer view of the other world we should not make so much of either the smiles or frowns of this.
  
3. **What do you think of coming foul off in the trial of your humbling circumstances?** “The lead is consumed of the fire; the founder melts in vain; for the wicked are not plucked away. Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord has rejected them.” (Jer 6:29-30). That the issue of it is 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, before our hearts are humbled (Isa 1:5, Ezek 24:13).

## 9. Preparation for Heaven Through Humbling Circumstances

Think with yourselves, how, by humbling circumstances, the Lord prepares us for heaven. “Giving thanks to the Father, who has made us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” (Col 1:12, with 2 Cor 5:5). The stones and timber are laid down, turned over and over, and hewed, before they are set up in the building; and not set up just 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 do you think to be made suitable 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 dishonor are fitted for destruction that way; but vessels of honor 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 you must have it both here and there or you cannot digest it. Why do you not quarrel, too, that there are not two summers in one year; two days in the twenty-four hours? The order of the one heaven is as firm as

that of the years and days, and you cannot reverse it. Therefore, choose 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 you are not capable of heaven.** “Now, he that has wrought us for the self-same thing is God.” (2 Cor 5:5). You 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 into Abraham’s bosom; but except you be humbled you are not capable,

**a. Of the Bible-heaven,** that heaven described in the Old and New Testaments. Is not that heaven a lifting up in due time? But, how shall you 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, who will not fight the good fight? How can it be a rest to you who cannot submit to labor?

**b. Of the saints’ heaven.** “And he said to 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.” (Rev 7:14). This answers the question about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the saints with them there. They were brought down to the dust by humbling circumstances, and out of these they came before

the throne. How can you ever think to be lifted up with them with whom you cannot think to be brought down?

**c. Of Christ's heaven.** “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.” (Heb 12:2). Oh! Consider how the Forerunner made His way. “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?” (Luke 24:26). And lay your account with it that if you get where He is you must go there as He went. “And He said, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.” (Luke 9:23).

## **10. Give Up Worldly Hopes and Fix on Heavenly Joy**

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 you come there. There is a prevailing evil. “You are wearied in the greatness of your way; yet you did not say, There is no hope.” (Isa 57:10). 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 9:10). This makes humbling work very lonesome; we are so hard to quit hold of the

creature, to fall off from the breast and be weaned. But fasten on the other world, and let your hold of this go; so shall you “be humbled” indeed under “the mighty hand.” The faster you hold the happiness of that world the easier it will be to accommodate yourselves to your humbling circumstances here.

## **II. Make use of Christ in all His offices for your humiliation under your humbling circumstances.**

That only is kindly humiliation that comes in His way. “And they shall look on Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn,” etc. (Zech 12:10). This 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; 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 33:24), and fit for service, doing or suffering. “How much more shall the blood of Christ purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Heb 9:14). Consider His atoning sacrifice as the source of your peace. When you are troubled with the consciousness of your sins, remember that He has made full satisfaction for them. His priestly intercession secures your pardon and acceptance

with God, even in the most humbling circumstances. Let this assure your heart, and bring you low in true humility before Him.

**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 oppressive 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 (Ps 25:9-10). In your perplexities and uncertainties, seek His guidance. He reveals the hidden wisdom of God, and will enlighten your mind to see His hand in every trial. When you are confounded and know not what to do, let Christ be your counselor, and He will lead you in the path of humility and submission to the will of God.

**3. As your King.** You have a stiff heart, loath to bow, even in humbling circumstances: take a lesson from Moses what to do in such a case. “And he said, Let my Lord, I pray you, go among us (for it is a stiff-necked people), and pardon our iniquity and our sin.” (Exod 34:9). Put it in His hand that is strong and mighty (Ps 24:8). He is able to cause it to melt, and, like wax before the fire, turn to the seal. Submit your will to His sovereign rule. He is the King of kings, whose power can subdue every rebellious thought and bring every proud heart into subjection. His scepter is a scepter of grace,



and His reign is one of righteousness and peace. Let His sovereign authority over your life be acknowledged, and you will find true humility in bowing to His will.

## **Conclusion:**

Think on these directions in order to put them in practice, remembering: If you know these things you are happy if you 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 it till death; and humbling circumstances will attend you while you are in this lower world. A change of them you may get; but a freedom from them you cannot, till you 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.

Let us, therefore, commit ourselves to Christ in all His offices, seeking His grace to humble us rightly under His mighty hand. Let us learn from His example and teachings, that through Him, we may be conformed to His image, meek and lowly in heart, and thus find rest unto our souls. What remains of the purpose of this text I shall comprise in further meditations and applications, as the Lord grants us understanding and grace. Amen.

## **Doctrine II: There is a due time in which those that now humble themselves under the mighty hand of God will certainly be lifted up.**

- 1. Those who shall share of this lifting up must lay their account in the first place, with a casting down.** “In the world you shall have tribulation.” (Rev 7:14, John 16:33). 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 the casting down, we shall not taste 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.** “It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.” (Lam 3:27). It is not the being cast down 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. Those who are never humbled in humbling circumstances shall never be 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 16:19); but such a lifting up as will end in a more grievous fall. “Surely you set them in slippery places, you cast them down in a moment.” (Ps 73:18). But they who will not humble themselves in humbling circumstances will find that their obstinacy will keep their misery ever fast on them without remedy.

**4. Humility of spirit in humbling circumstances ascertains a lifting up out of them sometime, with the goodwill and favor of Heaven.** “I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone that exalts himself shall be abased, and he that humbles himself shall be exalted.” (Luke 18:14). Solomon observes that “A soft answer turns away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger.” (Prov 15:1). And so it is, that while the proud, through their obstinacy, do but wreath the yoke faster about their own necks, the humble ones, by their yielding, make their relief sure. “He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts 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 adversaries of the Lord shall be broken in pieces.” (1 Sam 2:8-10). So the cannon will break down a stone wall, while 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.** “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.” (Hab 2:3). To everything there is a time, as for humbling, so for lifting up (Eccl 3:3). We do not know it but God knows it, Who has appointed it. Let not the humble one say, I shall never be lifted up. There is a time fixed for it, as precisely as for the rising of the sun after a long and dark night, or the return of the spring after a long and sharp winter.

**6. It is not to be expected that immediately on one’s humbling himself, the lifting up is to follow.** No: one is not merely to lie down under the mighty hand, but to lie still, waiting the due time; humbling work is lonesome work; the Israelites had forty years of it in the wilderness. God’s people 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. “Who is among you that fears the Lord, that obeys the voice of his servant, that walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.” (Isa 1:10).

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

reap if we do not faint.” (Gal 6:9). 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 for it. “He that believes shall not make haste.” (Isa 28:16). Much of the beauty of anything depends on the timing of it, and He has fixed that in all that He does. “He has made everything beautiful in His time.” (Eccl 3:11).

- 8. The lifting up of the humble will not fail to come in the appointed and due time.** “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.” (Hab 2:3). Time makes no halting, it is 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.

## **A Word in General to the Lifting Up Awaiting 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.** “I will extol You, O Lord, for You have lifted me up, and have not made my foes to rejoice over me.” (Ps 30:1). 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 15:1, Num 21:17).

**2. A total lifting up, competent to them at the end of time, at death.** “It came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom.” (Luke 16:22). Then the Lord deals with them no more by parcels, but carries their relief to perfection (Heb 12:23). Then He takes off all their burdens, eases them of all their weights, and lays no more on forever. 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 there 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 and ease, or a change of our burdens. God sees there are times in which it is needful for His people to be “in heaviness” (1 Pet 1:6), to have their “hearts brought down with grief.” (Ps 107:12). 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 them down. “So that, contrariwise, you ought rather to forgive, and comfort him, lest perhaps such an one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.” (2 Cor 2:7). 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 continue, and when the healing 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! “As a servant earnestly desires the shadow, and as a hireling looks for the reward of his work; so am I made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me.” (Job 7:2-3). But it may be fitter, for all that, that we stay awhile, and struggle with our burdens. “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.” (Phil 1:24-25). A few days might have taken Israel out of Egypt into Canaan; but they would have been too soon there if they had made all that speed; so it was necessary that they 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 no sooner. And thus a lifting up is secured for the humble.

If one should assure you, when reduced to poverty, that the time would certainly come yet that you should be rich; when sore sick, that you 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 humbles 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 you may be assured of it from the following considerations.**

The nature of God, duly considered, ensures it. "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide; neither will He keep His anger forever." (Ps 103:8-9). 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 entangling and perplexing but He can unravel them; so hopeless but He can remedy them. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (Gen 18:14). Be



our case what it will, it is never past reach with Him to help it; but then it is the most proper season for Him to take it in hand when all others have given it over. “For the Lord shall judge His people, and repent Himself for His servants; when He sees that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left.” (Deut 32:36).

**2. Infinite goodness inclining to help.** He is good and gracious in His nature (Exod 34:6-9). And therefore His power is a spring of comfort to them (Rom 14:4). 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. “And we have known and believed the love that God has to us. God is love; and he that dwells in love, dwells in God, and God in him.” (1 John 4:16). He has the bowels of a father towards the humble. “Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.” (Ps 103:13). Yea, bowels of mercy more tender than a mother to her sucking child (Isa 49:15). Wherefore, nevertheless His wisdom may see it necessary to put them in humbling circumstances, and keep them there for a time, it is not possible He can leave them there altogether.

**3. Infinite wisdom, that does nothing in vain, and therefore will not needlessly keep one in humbling circumstances.** “But though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according

to the multitude of His mercies; for He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.” (Lam 3:32-33). God sends afflictions for humbling, 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.

## **The providence of God, viewed in its stated methods of procedures with its objects, insures it.**

Turn your eyes which way you will on the Divine providence, you may conclude from it that in due time the humble will be lifted up.

Observe the providence of God in the revolutions of the whole course of nature, day succeeding to the longest night, a summer to the winter, a waxing to a waning of the moon, a flowing to an ebbing of the sea, etc. Let not the Lord’s humbled ones be idle spectators of these things. They are for our learning. “Thus says the Lord, which gives the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divides the sea, when the waves of it roar; the Lord of hosts is His name. If those ordinances depart from before Me, says the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me forever.” (Jer 31:35-37). 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.

Observe the providence of God in the dispensations of it about the man Christ, the most noble and august object of it, more valuable than a thousand worlds (Col 2:9). 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 exalting Him to the Father's right hand in an eternity of glory? "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 the throne of God." (Heb 12:2). "And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him." (Phil 2:8-9). The exaltation could not fail to follow His humiliation. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" (Luke 24:26). And He saw and believed it would follow, as the springing of the seed does the sowing it (John 12:24). There is a near concern the humbled in humbling circumstances have here.

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. "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 brothers.” (Rom 8:29). And who would not be pleased to walk through the darkest valley treading His steps? This is a sure pledge of your 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 insures your exaltation out of your humbling circumstances. “Your dead men shall live, together with My dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, you that dwell in the dust.” (Isa 26:19). “Come and let us return to the Lord: for He has torn, and He will heal us; He has 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.” (Hos 6:1-2). “And has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” (Eph 2:6). Yea, He is gone into the state of glory for us as our forerunner. “Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever.” (Heb 6:20).

His humiliation was the price of your exaltation, and His exaltation a testimony of the acceptance of its payment to the full. There are no humbling circumstances you are in, but you would have perished in them, had not He purchased your lifting up out of them by His own humiliation (Isa 26:19). Now, His humbling grace in you is an evidence of the acceptance of His humiliation for your lifting up.

Observe the providence of God towards the Church in all ages. This has been the course the Lord has kept with her (Ps 129:1-4). Abel was slain by 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 (Gen 4:25). Noah and his sons were buried alive in the ark for 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, etc. We must be content to go by the footsteps of the flock; and if in humiliation, we shall surely follow them in exaltation too.

Observe the providence of God in the dispensations of His grace towards His children. The general rule is. "For God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble." (1 Pet 5:5). How are they brought into a state of grace? Is it not by a sound work of humiliation going before? (Luke 6:48). And ordinarily the greater the measure of grace designed for any, the deeper is their humiliation before, as in Paul's case. If they are to be recovered out of a backsliding case, the same method is followed: so that the deepest humiliation ordinarily makes way for the greatest comfort, and the darkest hour goes before the rising of the Sun of righteousness on them (Isa 66:5-13).

Observe the providence of God at length throwing down wicked men, however long they stand and prosper, "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." (Ps 37:35-36). 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 stench, 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**

The Word of God, from beginning to end, is the humbled saint's security for a lifting up. "Remember the word to Your servant, on which You have caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction; for Your word has quickened me." (Ps 119:49-50). His Word is the great letter of His name, which He will certainly cause to shine, "For You have magnified Your word above all Your name" (Ps 138:2); and in all generations has been safely relied on (Ps 12:6). Consider,

- 1. The Doctrines of the Word:** These teach faith and hope for the time and the happy issue which the exercise 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." (Heb 10:35). "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord." (Ps 27:14) "For they shall not

be ashamed that wait for Me.” (Compare Rom 9:33, Isa 49:23).

**2. The Promises of the Word:** These engage heaven explicitly for a lifting up to those that humble themselves in humbling circumstances: “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up;” (Jas 4:10). “And he that humbles himself shall be exalted.” (Matt 23:12). It may take a time to prepare them for lifting up, but that being done, it is secured. “Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble; You will prepare their heart; You will cause Your ear to hear.” (Ps 10:17). They have His word for deliverance (Ps 1:15). And though they may seem to be forgotten, they shall not be always so; the time of their deliverance will come. “For the needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish forever.” (Ps 9:18). “He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.” (Ps 102:17).

**3. The Examples of the Word:** These sufficiently confirm the truth of the doctrines and promises. “For whatever things were written before, were written for our learning: that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” (Rom 15:4). 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 set before our eyes to be seen. “Behold, we count them happy which endure. You 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.” (Jas 5:11). 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 prayers and cries of His humbled people in their humbling circumstances insures a lifting up for them at length. Be it so that the proud cry not when He binds them; yet His own humbled ones will certainly cry to Him. “Deep calls to deep at the noise of Your waterfalls; all Your waves and billows have gone over me. Yet the Lord will command His loving-kindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me, a prayer to the God of my life.” (Ps 42:7-8). And though unbelievers may soon be worn out and give it over altogether, surely believers will not do so. But even if they do so in a fit of temptation, dropping their hands in hopelessness, they will find it necessary to take it up again. “Then I said, I will not make mention of Him nor speak His name anymore. But His word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with holding it in, and I could not.” (Jer 20:9). They will cry night and day unto Him, knowing no time for giving it over till they be lifted up (Luke 18:7). “My eye trickles down and does not cease or have any intermission until the Lord looks down and beholds from heaven.” (Lam 3:49-50). Now, when Christ’s intercession is joined with these cries, there cannot but fail to be a lifting up.



And Christ's intercession is certainly joined with the cries and prayers of the humbled in their humbling circumstances. "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense, so that he might offer it with the prayers of all saints on the golden altar which was before the throne." (Rev 8:3). They are helped to groan for relief by the Spirit (Rom 8:26), and the prayers and groans which are through the Spirit are certainly to be made effectual by the intercession of the Son (Jas 5:16). And you may know they are by the Spirit if it happens that you are helped to continue praying, hoping for your relief on the ground of God's word of promise. For that praying which is by nature is a pool that will dry up in a long drought. The Spirit of prayer is the lasting spring (John 4:14). "In the day when I cried, You answered me and strengthened me with strength in my soul." (Ps 138:3). 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 will You not have mercy on Jerusalem, and on the cities of Judah, against which You have had indignation these seventy years?" (Zech 1:12). How then can they fail to get a lifting up in due time?

Christ is in deep earnest in His intercession for His people in their humbling circumstances. Some will speak a good word in favor of the helpless that would not be concerned if they succeed or not, but our Intercessor is in earnest in behalf of His humbled ones. For He is touched with sympathy in their case, "In all

their affliction He was afflicted.” (Isa 63:9). A most tender sympathy has He; “For he that touches you, touches the apple of His eye.” (Zech 2:8). He has their case upon His heart, where He is in the holy place in the highest heavens (Exod 28:29), and He keeps an exact account of the time of their humbling circumstances, however long it may be (Zech 1:12). And it is His own business. The lifting up which they are to have is a thing that is secured to Him in the promises made to Him on account of the blood He shed for them (Ps 89:33-36). So not only are they looking on earth, but the man Christ is in Heaven looking for the accomplishment of these promises, “But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God; from that time on expecting until His enemies should be made His footstool.” (Heb 10:12-13). How is it possible, then, that He should be frustrated? Again, these humbling circumstances are still His own sufferings, though not in His person, yet in His members. “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.” (Col 1:24). Therefore there is all ground to conclude that He is in deep earnest.

His intercession is always effectual, “And I know that You hear Me always.” (John 11:42). It cannot fail to be so, because He is the Father’s well-beloved Son. His intercession has a plea of justice for its ground, “We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” (1 John 2:1). And He has all power in Heaven and on earth lodged in Him (John 5:22). And,

finally, He and His Father are one, and their will is one. So both Christ and His Father desire the lifting up of the humble ones, but yet only in due time.

I now proceed to a more particular view of the point: We will consider the lifting up as brought about in time, which is the partial lifting up. This lifting up does not take place in every case of a child of God. One may be humbled in low circumstances from which he is not to get a lifting up in time. We would not from the promise presently conclude that we, being humbled under our low circumstances, shall certainly be taken out of them and freed from them before we get to the end of our journey. For it is certain there are some humiliating things which we can by no means be rid of while in this world, such as our imperfections, our sinfulness, and our mortality. And there are particular humbling circumstances the Lord may bring about us, and keep about us, until we go down to the grave. Yet at the same time He may lift up another from the same circumstances. Heman was pressed down all along, from his youth onward (Ps 88:15); but others have been pressed down all their lifetime (Heb 2:15).

**Objections:** If that is the case, what about the promise to lift us up? Where is the lifting up if one may go to the grave under the weight?

**Answer:** If there were no life after this, there would perhaps be ground for such an objection. But since there is another life, there is no valid objection to be made. In the other life the promise will be

accomplished to those who have been humbled (Luke 16:22). Consider that the great term for accomplishment of the promises is the other life, and not this one: “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off; and were persuaded of them, and embraced them.” (Heb 11:13). Whatever accomplishment of the promise is here it is not of the nature of a stock, but it is but a sample or a pledge.

**Question:** But then may we not stop praying for the lifting up in that case?

**Answer:** No, because we do not know when that is our case. For a case may be past all hope in our eyes and in the eyes of others, yet God may design a lifting up in time. This was Job’s case, “What is my strength, that I should hope? And what is my end, that I should prolong my life?” (Job 6:11). But, be that as it may, we should never give over praying for the lifting up, since it will certainly come to all that pray for it – if not here, then hereafter. The promise is sure, and that is the commandment; therefore such praying cannot fail to have a happy issue at length: “Call on Me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.” (Ps 50:15). The whole life of a Christian is a praying, waiting life. And we are given temporal deliverances as pledges to encourage us to it. “And not only they, but ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of our body.” (Rom 8:23). And whoever observes that full lifting up

at death to be at hand must certainly rise, if he has given over his case as hopeless.

However, there are some cases in which this lifting up does not take place. God gives His people some notable deliverances, even in time raising them out of remarkably humbling circumstances. The storm is changed into a calm, and they remember it as waters that fail (Ps 40:1-4).

Some may be in humbling circumstances very long, heavy and hopeless circumstances, and yet a lifting up be held back for a long time. This is sometimes the case with the children of God who are set to bear the yoke in their youth as it was with Joseph and David; or of those that get it laid on them in their middle age, as it was with Job, who could not have been less than forty years old when his trouble came; but afterwards he lived one hundred and forty years (Job 42:16). God by such methods prepares a man for peculiar usefulness.

Others may be in humbling circumstances, heavy and long, and may be quite hopeless in the ordinary course of providence, yet they may get a lifting up before they come to their journey's end. The life of some of God's children is like a cloudy and rainy day, in which the sun breaks out from under the clouds in the afternoon, shining fair and clear a little, and then it sets. "And it shall happen in that day that the light shall not be clear nor dark. But it shall happen that at evening time it shall be light." (Zech 14:6-7). Such was the case with

Jacob in his old age, brought in honor and comfort into Egypt, to his son, and then he died.

Yet whatever liftings up they may get in this life, they will never lack some weights to hang on them for their humbling. They may have their singing times, but their songs while in this world will be mixed with groanings, “For we that are in this tabernacle groan, being burdened.” (2 Cor 5:4). The unmixed dispensation is reserved for the other world. But this one will be a wilderness to the very end, where there will be howlings alongside of the most joyful notes.

All the liftings up which the humbled meet with now are pledges, and only pledges and samples of the great lifting up which awaits them on the other side. And they should look upon them as such, “And I will give her her vineyards from there, and the valley of Achor 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 up out of the land of Egypt.” (Hos 2:15). Our Lord is now leading His people through the wilderness, and the manna and the water of the rock are earnest of the milk and honey flowing in the promised land. They have not yet come home to their Father’s house, but they are travelling on the road. And their elder brother Christ is with them (Cant 4:8), bearing their expenses, taking them into inns for rest by the way, and as it were, refreshing them with partial liftings up. But then they must get on the road again. And that entertainment by the way is but a pledge of the full

entertainment He will give them when they arrive at their eternal home.

**Objection:** But people may get a lifting up here in time, yet there is no pledge of a lifting up on the other side. How then shall I know it is a pledge?

**Answer:** 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 for the accomplishing of the promises, so we may be sure that when God once begins to clear His bond, He will certainly hold on until it is fully cleared. “The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.” (Ps 138:8). So we may say, as Naomi said to Ruth, when she received the six measures of barley from Boaz, “He will not rest until he has finished the thing today.” (Ruth 3:18). There are liftings up that come by common providence and these indeed are single, not being pledges of more. But the promise chains mercies together, so that one received is a pledge of another to come; yea, of the whole chain to the end (2 Sam 5:12).

**Question:** But how shall I know that the lifting up comes by way of the promise?

**Answer:** That which comes by the way of the promise comes in the low way of humiliation, the high way of faith, or believing the promise, and the long way of waiting hope and patient continuance: “Therefore, be patient, brothers, to the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and he has long patience for it, until he receives the early

and latter rain.” (Jas 5:7). Humility prepares for the accomplishment of the promise, faith sucks its breast, and patient waiting hangs by the breast until the milk comes flowing forth abundantly.

But no liftings 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 (Ps 17:14). 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, this same spending money is more valuable than the world’s stock: “You have put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.” (Ps 4:7). But though it is better than that and their services too and worth more than all their waiting, yet it is below the honor of their God to put them off with it, “But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one; therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.” (Heb 11:16).

We shall now consider what they will get by this lifting up promised to the humbled ones. They will get:

1. A removal of their humbling circumstances. God, having tried them a while, humbling them and bringing down their hearts, will at length take their burden off, remove the weight that has hung on them so long, and so will take them off that part of their trial joyfully. And He will let them get up, though their back has been long bowed down. And



this He will do in two ways: either in kind, or by a total removal of the burden. Job got such a lifting up when the Lord turned back his captivity, increased again his family and substance, which had both been desolated. When his persecutor Saul fell in battle, David was brought to the kingdom after many a weary day, yet he had expected one day to fall by his hand. It is easy with our God to make such turns in the most humbling circumstances.

Or the equivalent good, removing the weight of the burden so that it does not press them down any more, even though it remains. “And He said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, I will rather glory in my infirmities, so that the power of Christ may rest on me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities.” (2 Cor 12:9-10). Though they may not yet be to the shore, yet their head is no longer under the water, but lifted up. David speaks feelingly of such a lifting up, “For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion. In the secret of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me on a rock. And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies round about me. Therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle. I will sing, yea, I will sing praises to the Lord.” (Ps 27:5-6). Such an experience overwhelmed the Hebrews in the fiery furnace: the fire burned, but it could burn nothing but their bonds; they had its warmth and its light, but nothing of the scorching heat.

2. A comfortable sight of the acceptance of their prayers which they put up in their humbling circumstances. While prayers are not answered, but trouble continued, they are apt to think they are not accepted or regarded in Heaven, because there is no change in their case, "If I had called, and He had answered me, yet I would not believe that He had listened to my voice, for He breaks me with a tempest." (Job 9:16-17). But that is a mistake! They are accepted immediately, even though there does not seem to be an answer to prayer. "And this is the confidence we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us." (1 John 5:14). The Lord does with them as a father with the letters coming thick from his son abroad. He reads them one by one with pleasure and carefully 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 15:28).

3. A heart-satisfying answer to their prayers, so that 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 2:1). Accepted prayers may not be answered for a long time; in Abraham's and David's case it was many years, but they cannot miscarry or be unanswered at length (Ps 9:18). The time will come when God will count it out to them according to the promise, and they shall change their note and say, "I love the Lord, because He has heard my voice and my

supplication.” (Ps 116:1). 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 15:3). Standing on the shore and looking back to what they have passed through, they will be made to say, “He has done all things well.” (Mark 7:37). Those things which are bitter to Christians in the passing through are very sweet when we reflect on them (Samson’s riddle is then verified in their experience).
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 principal and interest together: the mercy is increased according to the time they waited, and the expenses and hardships sustained during the dependence of the process. The fruits of common providence are soon ripe, soon rotten. But the fruit of the promise is often a long time ripening, but then it endures. And the longer it takes to ripen, the more valuable it is when it comes. Abraham and Sarah waited for the promise about ten years, and at length they thought of a way to hasten it (Gen 16). It soon took, in the birth of Ishmael, but he was not the promised son. They were coming into extreme old age before the promise was brought forth (Gen 18:11). But when it came, they got it with an

addition of the renewing of their ages (Gen 21:7, 25:1). The most valuable of all the promises was the longest in being fulfilled, namely, the promise of Christ, being about four thousand years.

6. The spiritual enemies that flew thick about them in the time of the darkness of the humbling circumstances, these will be scattered at this lifting up in the promise. “And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoices in the Lord, my mouth is enlarged over my enemies. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread, and they that were hungry ceased.” (1 Sam 2:1, 5). 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 14:30). Such a sight will they that humble themselves under humbling circumstances get of their spiritual enemies when the time comes for their lifting up.

We come now to the due time of His lifting up. That is a natural question of those who are in humbling circumstances, “Watchman, what of the night?” (Isa 21:11-12). And we cannot answer it to the humbled soul, but in the general.

The lifting up of the humbled will not be overlong, 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, you 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, “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” (2 Cor 4:17). 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 so shortly. Therefore, it is determined to be a time that comes soon (Luke 18:7), soon in respect of its weight and worth.

When the time comes, it and only it will appear the due time. To everything there is a season, and a great part of Wisdom lies in discerning it, and doing things in this season of it. And we may be sure infinite Wisdom cannot miss the season, by mistaking it. “He is a rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are judgment.” (Deut 32:4). But whatever God does will abide the strictest examination, in that, as all other points. “I know that whatever God does, it shall be forever; nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it: and God does it that men may fear before Him.” (Eccl 3:14). It is true, many times, appear to us as the due time for lifting up, which yet really is not so, because there are some circumstances hid from us, which render that season unfit for the thing. Thus, “My time is not yet come, but your time is always ready.” (John 7:6). But when all the circumstances, always foreknown to God, shall come to be opened out, and laid together before us, we shall then see the lifting up is come in the

time most for the honor of God and our good, and that it would not have done so well sooner.

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. “At the end it shall speak; it will surely come, it will not tarry.” (Hab 2:3). Though it tarry, it will not linger, nor be put off to another time. Oh, what rest of heart would the firm faith of this afford us! There is not a child of God but would, with the utmost earnestness, protest against a lifting up before the due time, as against an unripe fruit cast to him by an angry father, which would set his teeth on edge. Since it is so, then, could we firmly believe this point, that it will 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 ever so hopeless, were mountains of difficulties lying in the way of it, at the appointed time it will blow (Hebrew; Hab 2:3), – a metaphor from the wind rising in a moment after a dead calm.

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. “For we would not, brothers, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia; that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch 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, which raises the dead.” (2 Cor

1:8-9). Things soon seem to us arrived 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 generally God carries His people's humbling circumstances downward, still downward, till they come to that point.

In this 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 Providence towards the Church and every particular believer (Rom 8:29). He was all along a man of sorrows; as His time went on the waters swelled more, till He was brought to the dust of death; then He was buried, and the gravestone sealed; which done, the world thought they were 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 most remarkable liftings up that His people get are fashioned after this grand pattern.

Another end which Providence aims at is to carry the believer clean off his own and all created foundations, to fix his trust and hope in the Lord alone. "That we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raises the dead." (2 Cor 1:9). The life of a Christian here is designed to be a life of faith; and though faith may act more easily when it has some help from sense, yet it certainly acts most nobly when it acts in opposition to sense. Then is it pure faith, when it stands only on its

own native legs, the power and word of God. “And being not weak in faith, he did not consider 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 faith, giving glory to God.” (Rom 4:19-20). And thus it must do when matters are carried to the utmost point of hopelessness.

Again, due preparation of the heart for the lifting up out of humbling circumstances goes before the due time of that lifting up, according to the promise. It is not so in every lifting up. The liftings up of common providences are not so critically managed; men will have them, will wait for them no longer, and God flings them in anger, before they are prepared for them. “I gave you a king in My anger.” (Hos 13:11). They can by no means abide the trial, and God takes them off as reprobate silver that is not able to abide it (Jer 6:29-30).

This due preparation consists in due humiliation (Ps 10:17). And it often takes much work to bring this about, 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 that he had endured both ways, God saw it necessary to speak to him Himself for his humiliation (Job 38:1). By that speech of God Himself, he was brought to his knees (Job 40:4-5). And we should have thought he was then sufficiently humbled, and perhaps he thought so too.



But God saw a further degree of humiliation necessary, and therefore begins again to speak for his humiliation, which at length laid him in the dust. And when he was thus prepared for lifting up, he got it.

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

**1. A deep sense of sinfulness and unworthiness of being lifted up at all.**

“Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer You? I will lay my hand on my mouth.” (Job 40:4). People may be long in humbling circumstances before they are brought this length; even good men are much prejudiced in their own behalf, and may so far forget themselves as to think God deals His favors unequally and is mighty severe on them more than others. Elihu marks this fault in Job under his humbling circumstances (Job 33:10-12). And I believe it will be found, there is readily a greater keenness to vindicate our own honor from the imputation the humbling circumstances seem to lay on it than to vindicate the honor 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 13:4), 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 honor to give way 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. Thus we are ready to think His word fails, whereas it is but our own rash conclusion from it that fails. “I said in my haste, All men are liars.” (Ps 116:11). Several of the saints have suffered much by this means, and in this way learned to let alone filling up that blank. The first promise was thus used by believing Eve (Gen 4:1). Another promise was so by believing Abraham (Gen 16), after about ten years of waiting.

If this is the case of any child of God, do not let them be discouraged by thinking they were over-rash in applying the promise to themselves: they were only so in applying the time to the promise; a mistake 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 in it; and if that is not kept, the proud heart is stumbled. “But Naaman was angry, 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.” (2 Kgs 5:11). But the Lord will have His people broken off from that too, that they shall prescribe no way to Him, but leave it to Him entirely, as in that case, “He went down and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God, and he was clean.” (2 Kings 5:14). The compass of our knowledge of ways and means is very narrow. If one is blocked up, often 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 repeating disappointments from those quarters from which 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 hastily they have sometimes been, that they behooved 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. In that case they will be brought to be content with any measure of it in time, without prescribing how much. “If I shall find favor in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me again – But if He thus say, I have no delight in you; behold, here I am, let Him do as seems good to Him.” (2 Sam 15:25-26).

**5. The continuing of praying and waiting on the Lord in the case.** “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereto with all perseverance.” (Eph 6:18). 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 Kgs 6:33). But due humility, going before the lifting up, brings men to that temper to pray, wait, and hang on resolutely, setting no time for the giving it over till the lifting up comes, whether in time or eternity (Lam 3:49-50).

**6. Mourning under mismanagements in the trial.** “Therefore have I uttered that I did not understand things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.” (Job 42:3). The proud heart dwells and expatiates on the man’s sufferings in the trial, and casts out 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 stopped. This is that humility that goes before the lifting up in time, in the way of the promise.

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

**world. And,**

1. 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.** Though one cannot in every case make them sure of a lifting up in time, yet they may be assured, be the case what it may, they will, without all peradventure, get a lifting up on the other side. “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.” (2 Cor 5:1). 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 them easy under it.

**(2) It will be a perfect lifting up (Heb 12:23).** They will be perfectly delivered out of their particular trials and special furnace, be what it will, that made them weary many a day. Lazarus was then delivered from his poverty and sores and lying at the rich man’s gate (Luke 16:22), and fully delivered. Yea, they will get a lifting up from all their humbling circumstances together. All imperfections will then be at an end: inferiority in relations, contradictions, afflictions, uncertainty, and sin. If it was long in 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 into a high place. “The beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom.” (Luke 16:22). Now they are at best but in a low place on this earth; there they will be seated in the highest heavens (Phil 1:23 with Eph 2:6). Often, in their humbling circumstances, they are obliged now to embrace dunghills; then they will be set with Christ on His throne; “To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with Me on My throne.” (Rev 3:21). Though they now cleave 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. They will also be lifted up into a high state and condition; a state of perfection. Out of all their troubles and uneasiness, they will be set in a state of rest; from their mean and inglorious condition, they will be advanced into a state of glory. Their burdened and sorrowful life will be succeeded with a fullness of joy; and, for their humbling circumstances, they will be clothed with eternal glory and honor.

**(4) It will be a final lifting up,** after which there will be no more casting down forever (Rev 7:16). 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. “In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. You hid Your face, and I was troubled.” (Ps 30:6-7). But then

indeed the trial is quite over, the fight is at an end, and then is the time of 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 desirable effect. I make no question but the saints will have the remembrance of the humbling circumstances they were under here below. Did the rich man in hell remember his having five brothers 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 6:10). 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 a 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 places, was the fittest to help the Israelites to sing in the highest key (Rev 15:3). And the humbling circumstances of saints on the earth will be of the same use to them in heaven.

2. 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 to every one his task, fight, trial, and work; and, till that is

done, we are in a sort immortal (John 9:4, 11:9). That work is,

Doing work; work set to us by the great Master, to be done for the honor of God and the good of our fellow-creatures (Eccl 9:10). We must be content to be doing on, even in our humbling circumstances, till that is 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. And it is,

Suffering work. There is a certain portion of suffering that is allotted for the mystical body; the Head has divided to the several members their proportions of it; and it is not the due time for that lifting up, till we have exhausted the share of it allotted to us. Paul looked on his life as a going on in that (Col 1:24).

**(2) When that lifting up comes, we shall 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 where it is better for the honor of God and His service that we are on the earth than in heaven. “Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.” (Phil 1:24). 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



are; 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. “The needy shall not always be forgotten.” (Ps 9:18). If the night were ever so long, the morning will come at length.

**Use (2)** Let patience have her perfect work. The husbandman waits for the return of his seed, the 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?

You 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. You have been called to humble yourselves in your humbling circumstances, and have been 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 ever so high: and He will triumphantly lift up the humble, be they ever so low.

END

**Afterword**

The doctrine of the Crook in the Lot has been expounded to you, demonstrating the superiority of a humble spirit in adverse conditions over the haughtiness of spirit that often accompanies exalted positions. You have been exhorted to bow under the mighty hand of God in your lowly estate, with the assurance of eventual exaltation. This teaching is not only for your understanding but for your application in daily life, trusting that God's timing and methods are perfect, even when they seem obscure to us.

As you journey through your humbling circumstances, remember the promises of Scripture that assure a lifting up in due time. This is not merely a theoretical comfort but a living hope, rooted in the faithfulness of God who cannot lie. Reflect on the examples of saints who have gone before you, who endured their trials and were ultimately lifted up by the sovereign hand of God. Their stories are not just historical accounts but testimonies to encourage and strengthen you in your path of humility.

Be confident that the pride of the lofty will be shattered. Those who exalt themselves will be abased, for God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. The eventual downfall of the haughty is as certain as the rising of the humble. God's justice and mercy are unfailing; He will not leave the humble in their low estate forever but will exalt them in due time, according to His perfect wisdom and timing.

In conclusion, let this doctrine anchor your soul in times of trial. God's promises are sure, and His faithfulness endures to all generations. Though you may be in the depths now, lift your eyes to the One who holds your future. The day of lifting up will come, and it will come in the perfect time, vindicating your faith and patience. Therefore, continue in humility, patience, and hope, for the Lord, who has promised, is faithful and will do it. Amen.

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ePub, .mobi & .pdf Editions. October 2023. Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, PO Box 491, West Linn, OR 97068