

# Crook in the Lot:

## Yielding to God's Will When You Don't Get Your Way

By Wesley Strackbein

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Early Reading: 1 Samuel 2:1-9

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**ECCLESIASTES 7:13:** “Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which he hath made crooked?”

Death. Betrayal. Sickness. Abuse. Persecution. Rejection. Financial setback. Delay of hopes realized. All of these trials and more are the lot of most Christians during some point in their life.

Whether it is the loss of a close family member or the rebellion of a child, whether it's the spread of vicious slander or the hope of victory dashed in some key arena, all Christians face hardships in their walk.

The question is: How should those who place their trust in Christ view suffering and respond during such seasons of trial? What is the appropriate posture one should show toward their Maker when affliction comes?

### **Thomas Boston: A Man Yielded to Christ amidst Sore Affliction**

Of all of the Bible commentators throughout Church history, noted Scottish Presbyterian Thomas Boston (1676-1732) offers some of the most penetrating insights into this tough question in his classic work, *Crook in the Lot: The Sovereignty and Wisdom of God Displayed in the Afflictions of Men*.

Boston's insights did not arise out of a vacuum, as his personal life was marked by much pain and travail. Among the most difficult trials he endured was the death of six of his ten children when they were yet small.<sup>1</sup> Sorrow struck the Boston home early, as the first child his wife Catherine brought into the world was born a double hairlip. This baby girl, who was given her mother's name, was incapable of nursing due to her handicap and died as an infant.<sup>2</sup>

The young couple was most hard-hit in the years 1707 to 1708 when they lost two baby boys back to back. Boston chose the name “Ebenezer” for the first son, because it represented a pillar of God's help and mercy in time of need (I Samuel 7:12). Yet this small pillar was taken from this earth in his infancy. Lamenting the loss of little Ebenezer, Boston wrote: “his death was

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<sup>1</sup> Noted in Philip Ryken's commentary on Ecclesiastes 7:13. See: Philip Graham Ryken, *Ecclesiastes: Why Everything Matters* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> See: Andrew Thomson, *Thomas Boston of Ettrick: His Life and Times* (London, Edinburgh, and New York: T. Nelson and Sons, 1895), pp. 72-74.

exceeding afflicting to me, and matter of sharp exercise. To bury his name, was indeed harder than to bury his body. . . .”<sup>3</sup>

When God blessed Boston and his wife with another little boy the following year, he wrestled with what to name their newborn son. The question, he remarked, “was no small exercise to me . . . when I considered, how that, after the death of Ebenezer, my soul had often said to the Lord, ‘How will this loss be made up?’ And my prayer had still been, that God would give me another pillar to set up.” After much deliberation, he gave the name Ebenezer to this second baby boy.<sup>4</sup>

Yet the life of this little Ebenezer would also be short-lived. Boston described the scene of his son’s funeral as follows:

When the child was laid in the coffin, his mother kissed his dust. I only lifted the cloth off his face, looked on it, and covered it again. . . . When the nails were driving, I was moved for that I had not kissed [him] . . . and I would fain have caused draw the nail again, but because of one that was present, I restrained . . . myself. . . .<sup>5</sup>

Despite his sore vexation over this fresh loss, Boston recognized God’s sovereign hand in this hardship and yielded to it submissively, relating the state of his heart with these words:

I see most plainly that sovereignty challenges a latitude, to which I must stoop, and be content to follow the Lord in an untrodden path; and this made me with more ease to bury my second Ebenezer than I could do the first.<sup>6</sup>

### **Thomas Boston: A Powerful Witness on Heart Submission in Adversity**

Through this anvil of adversity, a great public ministry was forged. Boston’s heart-wrestlings amid affliction drove him to mine relevant texts from Scripture that spoke to his family’s struggles.<sup>7</sup> From this careful study, Boston’s pulpit erupted with powerful and stirring messages. George Morrison, who edited his memoirs in later years, remarked:

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas Boston, *Memoirs of the Life, Times, and Writings, of the Rev. Thomas Boston, of Ettrick* (Aberdeen: George and Robert King, 1852), p. 200.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 207.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> According to biographer Andrew Thomson, Boston himself acknowledged that “afflictions not infrequently found his texts for him, and that those sermons were the most profitable to others which had taken their shape and colouring from his personal and family history, and had been suggested by the events of his own life.” Recorded in: Andrew Thomson, *Thomas Boston of Ettrick: His Life and Times* (London, Edinburgh, and New York: T. Nelson and Sons, 1895), p. 75.

There was a grip in [his public teaching] that no preacher wins who is a stranger to his own heart. And there was in it a scriptural fullness that nothing but passionate devotion to the Bible gives.<sup>8</sup>

Boston's well-spring of insight also flowed freely from his pen; and his book, *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State*, was widely read and appreciated during his lifetime.

His other most enduring work, however, was not published until after his death. One of the last manuscripts Boston prepared for publication before his passing was *The Crook in the Lot*.<sup>9</sup> The book is based on Ecclesiastes 7:13: "Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which he hath made crooked?" Building from this text, Boston offers much deep yet practical instruction on how a Christian should consider adversity and respond rightly to it when it comes.<sup>10</sup>

### **Thomas Boston's Three Main Points** [p. 3]

**Proposition 1.** Whatever crook there is in one's lot, it is of God's making.

**Proposition 2.** What God sees fit to mar, no one shall be able to mend in his lot.

**Proposition 3.** The considering of the crook in the lot as the work of God, or of His making, is a proper means to bring us to behave right under it.

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## **SECTION 1a**

### **PROPOSITION 1—Whatever Crook There is in One's Lot, It is of God's Making**

**THOMAS BOSTON:** "God has, by an eternal decree, immovable as mountains of brass, Zechariah 6:1, appointed the whole of every one's lot, the crooked parts thereof, as well as the straight." [p. 19]

**London Baptist Confession of Faith: Chapter 2, Section 2 (Of God and of the Holy Trinity):** "[God] is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom

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<sup>8</sup> George Morrison wrote this statement in the introduction to the new edition of *Memoirs of the Life, Time, and Writings of Thomas Boston* (published in 1899), which is included in and quoted from: Thomas Boston, *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1964), p. 11.

<sup>9</sup> Noted in Philip Ryken's commentary on Ecclesiastes 7:13. See: Philip Graham Ryken, *Ecclesiastes: Why Everything Matters* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> All excerpts from Boston's classic work used in this message, with page numbers noted in [ ], are quoted from the following edition: Thomas Boston, *The Crook in the Lot: The Sovereignty of God Displayed in the Afflictions of Men* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2001). Hereafter cited as "Crook."

are all things, and he hath most sovereign dominion over all creatures, to do by them, for them, or upon them, whatsoever himself pleaseth;”

**Romans 11:34-36:** “For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”

**Psalms 135:6:** “Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.”

**Amos 3:6:** “If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people be afraid? If there is calamity in a city, will not the LORD have done it?” (NKJV)

**Deuteronomy 32:39:** “See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.”

**Exodus 4:11,** “And the LORD said unto [Moses], ‘Who hath made man’s mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?’”

**Daniel 4:34-35:** “And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: **and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, ‘What doest thou?’**” [*emphasis added*]

### **By Ordaining Crooks in Our Lot, God is Not the Author of Sin, Yet He is Sovereign Over It. Sin is Not Beyond His Purview; it is Under His Sovereign Control**

**1 John 1:16:** “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”

**London Baptist Confession of Faith: Chapter 5, Section 4 (On Divine Providence):** “The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves in his providence, that his determinate counsel extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sinful actions both of angels and men; and that not by a bare permission, **which also he most wisely and powerfully boundeth, and otherwise ordereth and governeth, in a manifold dispensation to his most holy ends**[*emphasis added*]; yet so, as the sinfulness of their acts proceedeth only from the creatures, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin.”

### **While Sin Springs *Immediately* from Sinful Creatures, God *Mediates* Sin to Accomplish His Divine Purpose—which Includes the Bringing of Crooks in Our Lot**

**THOMAS BOSTON:** “although the crook in your lot is indeed *immediately* from the creature’s hand, yet it is *mediately* from the hand of God.” [p. 38]

**THOMAS BOSTON:** “He holily permits [sinful crooks], suffering men ‘to walk in their own ways’ (Acts 14:16). Though He is not the Author of those sinful crooks, causing them to be by the efficacy of His power, yet, if He did not permit them, willing not to hinder them, they could not be at all; for ‘He shuts and no man openeth’ (Revelation 3:7).” [p. 21]

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## **SECTION 1b: Why Does God Ordain Crooks of Affliction for the Believer?**

### **REASON 1: God Sends Crooks in Our Lot that We Might Rid Ourselves of Earthly Idols and Wholly Delight in Him—for God Will Suffer No Rivals and Demands to be Exclusively Worshipped**

**THOMAS BOSTON:** “Since the crook in the lot is the special trial appointed for each one, it is altogether reasonable and becoming the wisdom of God that it falls on that which of all things rivals Him [in their thoughts].” [p. 12]

**Isaiah 42:8:** “I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another. . . .”

**Deuteronomy 6:5:** “And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”

**Luke 4:8:** “. . . Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”

### **The PROPHET SAMUEL Speaks to Wayward Israel—Their Crook Existed because They were Doubleminded; They were Worshiping False gods *and* the One True God.**

**I Samuel 7:3-5:** “And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, ‘If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, **and serve him only**[*emphasis added*]: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.’ Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only. And Samuel said, ‘Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD.’”

**Puritan DAVID CLARKSON, who was a Colleague of John Owen and became Owen’s Successor, writes:** “That which we *most delight* and rejoice in, that we worship as God. . . . we glory in it; and this is the prerogative which the Lord challenges (1Cor 1:31; Jer 9:23, 24). To rejoice more in our wisdom, strength, riches, than in the Lord, is to idolize them. To take more delight in relations, wife, or children, in outward comforts and accommodations, than in God, is to worship them, as we ought only to worship God. To take more pleasure in any way

of sin, uncleanness, intemperance, earthly employments, than in the holy ways of God, than in those spiritual and heavenly services wherein we may enjoy God, is idolatry.”<sup>11</sup>

**DAVID CLARKSON:** “When you are more careful and industrious to please men or yourselves, than to please God; to provide for yourselves and posterity, than to be serviceable unto God; more careful what you shall eat, drink, or wherewith be clothed; than how you may honor and enjoy God; to make provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof, than how to fulfill the will of God; more industrious to promote your own interests, than the designs of God; to be rich, or great, or respected amongst men, than that God may be honored and advanced in the world; more careful how to get the things of the world, than how to employ them for God; rise early, go to bed late, eat the bread of carefulness, that your outward estate may prosper, while the cause, and ways, and interests of Christ have few or none of your endeavors, **this is to idolize the world**[*emphasis added*], yourselves, your lusts, your relations, while the God of heaven is neglected. And the worship and service due unto *Him alone* is hereby idolatrously given to other things.”<sup>12</sup>

**THOMAS BOSTON** [from *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State*]: “Most men are so far from making God their chief end, in their natural and civil actions, that in these matters, God is not in all their thoughts. . . . They seek God indeed, but not for Himself, but for themselves. They seek him not at all, but for their own welfare: so their whole life is woven into one web of practical blasphemy; making God the means, and self their end; yea, their chief end.”<sup>13</sup>

**WILLIAM COWPER, stanza from “O for a Closer Walk with God”:**

The dearest idol I have known,  
Whate'er that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from thy throne,  
And worship only thee.

## **REASON 2: God Sends Crooks in Our Lot to Humble our Sinful Pride**

**1 Peter 5:5-6:** “God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. . . .”

**THOMAS BOSTON:** “The proud man is God’s rival; he makes himself his own god, and would have those about him make him theirs too. He rages and blusters if they will not fall down before him. But God will bring him down (Isaiah 40:4; Psalm 18:27).” [pp. 82-83]

**THOMAS BOSTON:** “Pride feeds itself on the man’s real or imaginary personal excellency and dignity, and, being so inured to it before others, cannot forget it before God. Luke 18:11: ‘God, I thank You I am not as other men.’ But humiliation of spirit makes it all vanish before him as does the shadow before the shining sun, and it lays the man, in his own eyes, lower

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<sup>11</sup> David Clarkson (1622-1686), “Soul Idolatry Excludes Men Out of Heaven,” published in *The Works of David Clarkson, Vol. II* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, [1864], 1988).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Boston, *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1964), pp. 126, 127.

than any. ‘Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man’ (Proverbs 30:2).” [p. 99]

**A HUMBLER TYRANT: King Nebuchadnezzar:** “Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.” (Daniel 4:37)

**THOMAS BOSTON:** “Lowliness levels the towering imaginations which pride mounts up against heaven; it 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.” [p. 74]

### **REASON 3: God Sends Crooks in Our Lot to Correct us for Our Sins**

**Psalms 89:30-32:** “If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.”

**Habakkuk 1:12:** “O LORD, thou hast ordained [the Chaldeans] for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction.”

**JOHN CALVIN:** “So long as we are rebellious against God, we are, in a state of the deepest wretchedness: now, the only means by which He bends and tames us to obedience, is his instructing us by his chastisements.”<sup>14</sup>

**Proverbs 3:11-12,** “My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction. For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.”

**MATTHEW HENRY:** “God often makes use of afflictions as a means to reduce those to himself who have wandered from him. Sanctified afflictions humble us for sin and show us the vanity of the world; they soften the heart, and open the ear to discipline.”<sup>15</sup>

**JOHN FLAVEL:** “God kills thy comforts from no other design but to kill thy corruptions; wants are ordained to kill wantonness, poverty is appointed to kill pride, reproaches are permitted to destroy ambition. Happy is the man who understands, approves, and heartily concurs with the design of God in afflicting providences.”<sup>16</sup>

### **REASON 4: God Sends Crooks in Our Lot to Check us from Engaging in Further Sin that We Would Otherwise Obstinate Pursue**

**Psalms 119:67:** “Before I was afflicted, I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.”

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<sup>14</sup> John Calvin’s Commentary on Psalm 119:67.

<sup>15</sup> Matthew Henry’s Commentary on Psalm 119:67.

<sup>16</sup> John Flavel, *The Method of Grace, in the Holy Spirits Applying to the Souls of Men, and the Eternal Redemption Contrived by the Father and Accomplished by the Son* (New York: The American Tract Society, 1820), p. 463.

**NOTE: Afflicting crooks have a way of halting a bad trajectory of stubborn sinfulness, jarring us to repent of our sins and change course.**

**CHARLES SPURGEON:** “God sometimes burn[s] up our comforts to make our hidden sins run out; and then he enables us to knock them on the head and get rid of them. That may be the reason of your trial—to put an end to some long-fostered sin.”<sup>17</sup>

**CHARLES SPURGEON:** “Christ and thy soul will never be *one* till thou and thy sins are *two*. Thy desires and longings must make a clean sweep of the devil and all his crew, or else Christ will not come and dwell with thee. ‘Well,’ says one, ‘but I cannot be perfect.’ No, but you cannot find peace till you desire to be. Wherever you harbour a sin, there you harbour misery. One sin willfully indulged in, and not forsaken by true repentance, will destroy the soul.”<sup>18</sup>

**SAUL on the ROAD to DAMASCUS (Acts 9):** Saul’s decided intent was to persecute the followers of Jesus Christ—but that same Jesus stopped Saul cold in his tracks and blinded him. This dramatic crook in Saul’s lot was a turning point for him, for he forsook the sin he was dead-set on committing and became a mighty herald for the true Gospel.

**BALAAM and the DONKEY: An Example with an Important Caveat (Numbers 22)**

**CHARLES SPURGEON:** “Often our trials act as a thorn hedge to keep us in the good pasture. . . . Sweet are the uses of adversity . . . ; it puts a bridle upon transgression and furnishes a spur for holiness.”<sup>19</sup>

### **REASON 5: God Sends Crooks in Our Lot to Discover Latent Corruptions that We Don’t Realize that We Have, so that We Might Avoid Future Pitfalls**

**THOMAS BOSTON:** “There are some corruptions in every man’s heart which lie, as it were, so near the surface that they are ready on every turn to rise up; but then there are others also which lie so very deep that they are scarcely observed at all. But as the fire under the pot makes the scum rise up, appear atop, and run over, so the crook in the lot rises up from the bottom and brings out such corruptions as otherwise one could hardly imagine to be within.” [pp. 29-30]

**The Prophet Jeremiah, for example, pronounced a curse on the day he was born and on the man who brought tidings of it:** “Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed. Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, ‘A man child is born unto thee’; making him very glad.” (Jeremiah 20:14-15)

**Another example: Job, in sore bitterness of spirit, charged God with cruelty:** “Thou art become cruel to me: with thy strong hand thou opposest thyself against me.” (Job 30:21)

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<sup>17</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, “The Sweet Uses of Adversity,” as recorded in *New Park Street Pulpit, Vol. 5*.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Excerpted from Spurgeon’s exposition of Psalm 119:67 as recorded in: Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*.

**CHARLES SPURGEON:** “Trials often discover sins—sins we should never have found out if it had not been for them. . . . It may be, too, that in this way God would prevent some future sin, some sin hidden from thine own eyes into which thou wouldst soon fall if it were not for his troubling thee by his providence.”<sup>20</sup>

## **REASON 6: God Sends Crooks in Our Lot to Draw forth Greater Graces in Us that Would not Otherwise Emerge; to Conform us More Fully to Christ’s Image**

**THOMAS BOSTON:** “Believers, through the remains of indwelling corruption, are liable to fits of spiritual laziness and inactivity, in which their graces lie dormant for the time. Besides, there are some graces which of their own nature are but occasional in their exercise, as being exercised only upon occasion of certain things which they have a necessary relation to, such as patience and long-suffering. Now, the crook in the lot serves to rouse up a Christian to the exercise of the graces, overpowered by corruption, and withal to call forth to action the occasional graces, ministering proper occasions for them.” [pp. 30-31]

**The late L.R. SHELTON JR.** (1923-2003)—longtime pastor of Mount Zion Baptist Church whom my friend Jeff Pollard succeeded—put the matter simply: “[**Suffering**] is used to our sanctification to make us more into the image and likeness of Christ.”<sup>21</sup>

**THOMAS BOSTON:** “The crook in the lot gives rise to many acts of faith, hope, love, self-denial, resignation, and other graces; to many heavenly breathings, pantings, and groanings, which otherwise would not be brought forth. . . .” [p. 31]

**CHARLES SPURGEON:** “Dost thou not understand that afflictions are often the black foils in which God doth set the jewels of his children’s graces, to make them shine the better? . . . See you not, then, that God may take away your comforts and your privileges to make you the better Christians? Why, the Lord always trains his soldiers, not by letting them lie on feather beds, but by turning them out and using them to forced marches and hard service. He makes them ford through streams, and swim through rivers, and climb mountains, and walk many a long march with heavy knapsacks of sorrow on their backs. This is the way in which he makes soldiers—not by dressing them up in fine uniforms, to swagger at the barrack gates, and to be fine gentlemen in the eyes of the loungers in the park. God knows that soldiers are only to be made in battle: they are not to be grown in peaceful times. **We may grow the stuff of which soldiers are made, but warriors are really educated by the smell of powder, in the midst of whizzing bullets, and roaring cannonades—not in soft and peaceful times** [*emphasis added*]. . . . Is not thy Lord bringing out thy graces and making them grow? This is the reason why He is contending with you.”<sup>22</sup>

**ROBERT E. LEE:** “We must expect reverses, even defeats. They are sent to teach us wisdom and prudence, to call forth greater energies, and to prevent our falling into greater disasters.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, “The Sweet Uses of Adversity,” as recorded in *New Park Street Pulpit*, Vol. 5.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted from L.R. Shelton, Jr., “Road to True Health, Wealth and Prosperity,” an article which serves as the introduction to *Free Grace Broadcaster* #158, the theme of which is “Suffering.”

<sup>22</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, “The Sweet Uses of Adversity,” as recorded in *New Park Street Pulpit*, Vol. 5.

<sup>23</sup> Robert E. Lee in an August 8, 1863 letter to Jefferson Davis. See: J. William Jones (Editor), *The Davis Memorial Volume* (New Orleans: N.D. McDonald & Company, 1890), p. 334.

## **REASON 7: God Sends Crooks in Our Lot so that We Might More Fully Learn His Precepts and Faithfully Keep Them**

**Psalm 119:71:** “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.”

**Proverbs 29:15:** “The rod and reproof give wisdom. . . .”

**Psalm 119:118:** “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.”

**Psalm 119:5-8:** “O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments. I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments. I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.”

**“Affliction Brings Man Home”** [selected excerpt]

*by English Clergyman and Poet Thomas Washbourne (1606-1687)*

Man like a silly sheep doth often stray,  
Not knowing of his way,  
Blind deserts and the wilderness of sin  
He daily travels in;  
There’s nothing will reduce him sooner than  
Afflictions to his pen.  
He wanders in the sunshine, but in rain  
And stormy weather hastens home again. . . .

Though for the present stripes do grieve me sore,  
At last they profit more,  
And make me to observe thy word. . . .

**An AMAZING POINT about JESUS** (Hebrews 5:8): “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.”

**Our Prayer Should Be that of Psalm 119:133:** “Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.”

## **REASON 8: God Sends Crooks in Our Lot to Demonstrate our Pedigree as True Believers and to Grant us the Privilege to Suffer for Christ’s Sake**

**Paul Writes to Timothy** (2 Timothy 3:10-12): “But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, 11 Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. 12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”

**THOMAS BOSTON:** “The crook in your lot is the special trial God has chosen for you to take your measure by. It is God’s fire, by which He tries what metal men are made of: Heaven’s touchstone for discovering true and counterfeit Christians.” [p. 55]

**Pastor L.R. SHELTON put it this way:** “Dear friend, God had only one Son without sin, but He has no sons without suffering.”<sup>24</sup>

**1 Thessalonians 3:2-4:** “I sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God . . . to comfort you concerning your faith: That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.”

**1 Peter 4:12-13:** “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.”

### **REASON 9: God Sends Crooks in Our Lot so that We Might Better Comfort Other Afflicted Souls during Their Hour of Trial**

**2 Corinthians 1:3-6:** “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; 4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. 5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. 6 And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.”

**CHARLES SPURGEON:** “Why does God lay trouble upon his people, and comfort them in it? It is that he may make them comforters of others. . . . A man who has never had any trouble is very awkward when he tries to comfort troubled hearts. . . . comforting men are to be made; they are not born so; and they have to be made by passing through the furnace themselves.”<sup>25</sup>

### **REASON 10: God Sends Crooks in Our Lot so that we Might Wholly Depend on Him for Our Every Need AND so that He Might Bring Greater Glory to Himself**

**1 Samuel 2:9:** “. . . by strength shall no man prevail.”

**2 Corinthians 3:5:** “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.”

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<sup>24</sup> Quoted from L.R. Shelton, Jr., “Road to True Health, Wealth and Prosperity,” an article which serves as the introduction to *Free Grace Broadcaster #158*, the theme of which is “Suffering.”

<sup>25</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, “Comforted and Comforting,” delivered on Thursday Evening, June 15, 1882 at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

**2 Corinthians 12:7-10:** “And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. **8** For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. **9** And he said unto me, ‘My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.’ **Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me**[*emphasis added*]. **10** Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

**Isaiah 42:8:** “I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another. . . .”

### **REASON 11: God Sends Crooks in Our Lot to Accomplish His Eternal Counsel and Purpose, which is for the Good of the Elect**

**Ephesians 1:11:** God “. . . worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”

**Romans 8:28:** “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

### **CONCLUDING STATEMENT on “Reasons Why God Sends Crooks in Our Lot”:**

**London Baptist Confession of Faith: Chapter 5, Section 5 (On Divine Providence):** “The most wise, righteous, and gracious God doth oftentimes leave for a season his own children to manifold temptations . . . to chastise them for their former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, that they may be humbled; and to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon Himself; and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for other just and holy ends. So that whatsoever befalls any of his elect is by his appointment, for His glory, and their good.”

## **SECTION 2**

**ECCLESIASTES 7:13:** “*Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which he hath made crooked?*”

### **PROPOSITION 2—What God Sees Fit to Mar, No One Shall Be Able to Mend in His Lot**

**THOMAS BOSTON:** “As to the crook in your lot, God has made it; and it must continue while He would have it so. Should you apply your utmost force to even it or make it straight, your attempt will be in vain; it will not alter it in spite of all that you can do. Only He who made it can mend it and make it straight. This consideration, this view of the matter, is a proper means to silence and satisfy men, and so to bring them into a dutiful submission to their Maker and Governor under the crook in their lot.” [p. 3]

## **SECTION 3: How Should We Respond to the Crooks in Our Lot?**

### **PROPOSITION 3—The Considering of the Crook in the Lot as the Work of God, or of His Making, is a Proper Means to Bring us to Behave Right under It**

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### **DIRECTIVE 1: When God Ordains Crooks in Our Lot to Check Our Sin and Ill Motives, We Must Not Brazenly Attempt to Bulldoze through These Roadblocks to Get Our Own Way**

#### **The Story of Balaam (Numbers 22:21-35)**

**MATTHEW HENRY:** “. . . it is common for those whose hearts are fully set in them to do evil to push on violently, and break through all the difficulties which Providence lays in their way to give check to them and to stop them in their career.”<sup>26</sup>

**WORD to the WISE:** God’s an infinitely wiser and more able chess player than we are, and we must not foolishly try to out-manuever Him. When we attempt this in our self-willed pride, we will be check-mated, as Balaam was.

#### **COUNTERPOINT: Jacob’s All-Night Wrestling Match (Genesis 32:22-32)**

**CHARLES SPURGEON:** “Oh, what noble work is this, that while God is casting down his child with one hand, he should be holding him up with the other: letting a measure of omnipotence fall on him to crush him, while the like omnipotence supports him under the tremendous load.”<sup>27</sup>

**HENRY MORRIS:** “This [incident] does not suggest that God was weaker than Jacob, but does show that God desires men to persist in prayer and that he delights to yield to such prayers. ‘Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?’ (Luke 18:7). ‘[M]en ought always to pray, and not to faint’ (Luke 18:1). There indeed is such a thing as a prevailing prayer, when the request conforms to will and the word of the Lord; and Jacob’s experience symbolizes all such prayers.

“To remind Jacob perpetually of the experience, the Angel imposed a physical injury on him. . . . This would inhibit Jacob from any undue presumption against God, since he would know that God really only *allowed* him to prevail; but at the same time it would never let him forget that God indeed had promised in this most unique encounter to bless him forever.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Excerpted from Matthew Henry’s commentary on Numbers 22:21-35.

<sup>27</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, “The Sweet Uses of Adversity,” as recorded in *New Park Street Pulpit, Vol. 5*.

<sup>28</sup> Henry Morris, *The Genesis Record* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1976), pp. 500-501.

## **DIRECTIVE 2: We Must Reject the Foolish Notion that Any Man Can—in His Own Meager Power—Best God in a Face-to-Face Encounter**

**I Samuel 2:9 makes this clear:** “For by strength shall no man prevail.”

**KEY POINT:** Jacob prevailed because God enabled him to prevail—and God left Jacob with a mark to remind him that He, God, had ultimate power and to demonstrate the result of the match was a willing condescension by Him to encourage Jacob’s faith.

## **DIRECTIVE 3: We Must Take Special Care not to Equate our Misguided Desires with God’s Divine Program**

### **Disciples Embrace Wrong “Vision” for Christ—Peter Wields the Sword**

**John 18:10-11:** “Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest’s servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant’s name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter, ‘Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?’”

### **A Misplaced Sadness: Men on the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)**

**MATTHEW HENRY:** “They had lost their dear Master, and were, in their own apprehensions, quite disappointed in their expectations from him. . . . if hope deferred makes the heart sick, hope disappointed, especially such a hope, kills the heart. But see how they made that the ground of their despair which if they had understood it aright was the surest ground of their hope, and that was the dying of the Lord Jesus: We trusted (say they) that it had been he that should have redeemed Israel. And is it not he that doth redeem Israel? Nay, is he not by his death paying the price of their redemption? Was it not necessary, in order to his saving Israel from their sins, that he should suffer?”<sup>29</sup>

## **DIRECTIVE 4: We Must Not Define Victory and Defeat on Our Personal Terms, But on God’s. PUT ANOTHER WAY: We Must Not Deem a Path God Has Made Straight as a “Crook in the Lot” because it Doesn’t Accomplish Our Personal Goals**

## **DIRECTIVE 5: We Must Not Make an Idolatry of our Personal Vision for the Future and Enthroned our Expectations above God’s Purpose**

**KEY POINT:** Our Tendency is to Cherish and Exalt our Own Personal Desires and Fantasies above God’s Sovereign Will—which inevitably Leads to Much Error and Misjudgment.

### **W.B. Yeats, “Meditations in Time of Civil War”**

We had fed the heart on fantasies,  
The heart’s grown brutal from the fare.

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<sup>29</sup> Excerpted from Matthew Henry’s commentary on Luke 24:13-35.

## **The Will to Fiction: We Must Reject an Autonomous, Self-Serving Imagination**

**R.J. RUSHDOONY:** “Because ours is an age with a will to fiction, the role of imagination is extremely important. Men who will not be governed by God’s word will not be governed by reality, because reality is not of their making. God having created all things, reality reflects the mind of God, not man. Hence, it is the essence of sin to resort to imagination to escape God’s law word.

“This problem is very urgently practical one, because every facet of the life of modern man is governed by imagination. This is basic to humanism, and it affects all men born of Adam (Gen 6:5), and especially modern man. Because Christians are born into a fallen world, and often educated by it, imagination replaces reality in their thinking and governs it. . . .

“[F]antasy refuse[s] to pay any attention to reality, because to accept reality is to accept God finally.”<sup>30</sup>

**CHARLES BRIDGES:** “[T]here are many things crooked in man’s eye, because they cross his own will, and thwart his own imaginary happiness. . . . Man’s will goes one way—God’s dispensation another. In every part of his course man must expect to meet with his crook, specially perhaps in his most tender, most ‘needed’ part. And hard it is to bear, till the spirit is thoroughly tamed to bear it. Yet no power of man can make it straight; only He that made it can mend it.”<sup>31</sup>

## **DIRECTIVE 6: We Must Not Grow Impatient and Seek to Remove Crooks Using Unlawful Means**

- **Desperate for a Son, Abraham took Hagar for a Concubine, which lead to the Birth of Ishmael and Much Strife Thereafter (Genesis 16).**
- **Desperate to Free the Hebrews from Slavery in Egypt, Moses Killed an Egyptian Taskmaster and Paid a Heavy Price for this Wrong Act.**

**Acts 7:23-25:** “And when [Moses] was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. 24 And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: 25 For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not.”

**ERROR of the WOULD-BE DELIVER:** It wasn’t God’s time, and it wasn’t God’s way. Moses’ attempt to take matters into his own hands led him to be “sent out to pasture” for forty years.

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<sup>30</sup> R.J. Rushdoony, *Systematic Theology, Vol. 1* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1994), pp. 474, 475.

<sup>31</sup> Charles Bridges in his notes on Ecclesiastes 7:13, as recorded in: Charles Bridges, *A Commentary on Ecclesiastes* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1961), p. 154.

**DIRECTIVE 7: We Must Not Ignore the Law of Sowing and Reaping, but Humbly Recognize When We Are the Cause of Our Own Troubles. We Must Not Fret against God for the Corrective Crooks He Puts in Our Lot.**

**Galatians 6:7:** “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

**Proverbs 19:3:** “The foolishness of man perverteth his way: and his heart fretteth against the LORD.”

**MATTHEW HENRY:** “In fretting, we are enemies to our own peace, and become self-tormentors; in fretting against the Lord we affront him, his justice, goodness, and sovereignty; and it is very absurd to take occasion from the trouble which we pull upon our own heads by our willfulness, or neglect, to quarrel with him, when we ought to blame ourselves, for it is our own doing.”<sup>32</sup>

**CHARLES BRIDGES:** “The fool rushes into the sin, and most unreasonably *frets* for the sorrow; as if he could ‘gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles’ (Matt. vii. 16). He charges his crosses, not on his own perverseness, but on the injustice of God (Ezek. xviii. 25). . . . Man. . . . while ‘eating the fruit of his own ways,’ *his heart frets against the Lord*. . . . Such is the pride and blasphemy of an unhumiliated spirit. The malefactor blames the judge for his righteous sentence (Isa. viii. 21, 22; Rev. xvi. 9-11, 21).”<sup>33</sup>

**UNREPENTANT, DESPITE HEAVY CORRECTION** (Jeremiah 5:3-4): “O Lord . . . thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return. Therefore I said, ‘Surely these are poor; they are foolish: for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God.’”

**CHARLES SPURGEON:** “Christ will not heal your wound till he has probed it to its very core. Christ is no un-qualified physician, no foolish surgeon, **who would close up a wound with proud flesh in it**[*emphasis added*]; but he will take the lancet, and cut, and cut, and cut again crossways, and he will lay the sore open, expose it, look into it, make it smart; and then after that, he will close up its mouth and make it whole.”<sup>34</sup>

**DIRECTIVE 8: We Must Not Question God’s Sense of Justice in Ordaining Crooks in Our Lot**

**Isaiah 45:9:** “Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! . . . Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, ‘What makest thou?’”

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<sup>32</sup> Matthew Henry in his commentary on Proverbs 19:3.

<sup>33</sup> Charles Bridges in his notes on Proverbs 19:3, as recorded in: Charles Bridges, *A Commentary on Proverbs* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1968), pp. 307-308.

<sup>34</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, “The Sweet Uses of Adversity,” as recorded in *New Park Street Pulpit, Vol. 5*.

**Romans 9:20:** “. . . who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, ‘Why hast thou made me thus?’”

**THOMAS BOSTON:** “. . . [E]ven good men are much prejudiced in their own behalf, and may so far forget themselves as to think God deals His favours unequally, and is mighty severe on them more than others. . . . 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. . . . 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.” [pp. 142-143]

**THOMAS BOSTON:** “[I]t is really madness for the potsherd of the earth, by their turbulent and refractory carriage under it, to strive with their Maker. And His beneficence to us, ill-deserving creatures, may well stop our mouth from complaining of His making a crook in our lot, who would have done us no wrong had He made the whole of it crooked. ‘Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?’ (Job 2:10)?” [p. 40]

### **DIRECTIVE 9: We Must Not Throw in the Towel in Serving God Due to Lingering Crooks in Our Lot**

#### **The Prophet Elijah’s “PITY PARTY” (1 Kings 19)**

**THOMAS BOSTON on Jeremiah:** “Jeremiah met with such a train of discouragements and ill-usage in the exercise of His sacred function that he was very near giving up, saying, ‘I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more His name’ (Jeremiah 20:9).” [p. 14]

**KEY POINT:** We must not disengage and resign ourselves to an uncaring apathy or ambivalence toward unresolved challenges. We must instead seek to be faithful kingdom stewards, come what may.

### **DIRECTIVE 10: We Must Recognize that God Has Not Given Us the Whole Picture—Yet He’s Given Us Enough for Godly Living, Even Amidst ‘Crooks’**

**Deuteronomy 29:29:** “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.”

**Romans 11:33,** “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”

**PURITAN RICHARD SIBBES:** “Howsoever He may wrap Himself up in a thick cloud that none can see Him, yet He is just and righteous; therefore when anything befalls us for which we can see no reason, yet we must reverence the Lord and adore His counsels and submit to Him who is infinitely wiser than we.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Richard Sibbes (1577-1635) in “Affliction Sanctified,” as recorded in his work, *Divine Meditations*.

**DIRECTIVE 11: We Must Believe and Be at Peace with *this* Simple Truth—that Man Plans His Ways, But Ultimately, God Directs His Steps**

**Proverbs 16:9:** “A man’s heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.”

**Proverbs 19:21:** “There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.”

**DIRECTIVE 12: In Light of this Truth, we Must Yield Our Will to God’s Divine Purpose and Not Strive for Our Own Selfish Way—not Simply with Lip-Service, but with True Heart Submission**

**CHARLES BRIDGES:** “It requires no less than [God’s] Almightyness to break the stubborn will into ready obedience. ‘Thy will be done’—is easily repeated, but hardly learned. If things are not ‘according to our mind,’ too often is there a struggle to break loose from the affliction; professing indeed to live by faith, yet repining at our hard condition.”<sup>36</sup>

**THOMAS BOSTON:** “It is better to yield to Providence than to fight it out. . . . Yielding to the sovereign disposal is both our becoming duty and our greatest interest. Taking that way, we act most honorably; for what honor can there be in the creature’s disputing his ground with his Creator? And we act most wisely, for whatever may be the success of some battles in that case, we may be sure that victory will be on heaven’s side in the war. I Samuel 2:9: ‘For by strength shall no man prevail.’” [page 87]

**MARTIN LUTHER, stanza from “A Mighty Fortress is Our God”:**

Did we in our own strength confide,  
Our striving would be losing;  
Were not the right Man on our side,  
The Man of God’s own choosing.  
Dost ask who that may be?  
Christ Jesus, it is He;  
Lord Sabaoth, His name,  
From age to age the same,  
And He must win the battle.

**DIRECTIVE 13: We Must Humble Ourselves in the Fear of God, and Repent of Our Sins—or We Cannot Expect the Crook in Our Lot to Be Straightened**

**Psalms 66:18:** “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.”

**HANNAH’S PERSONAL STRUGGLE and INSIGHTFUL PRAYER** (2 Samuel 2:3-4):  
“Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength.”

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<sup>36</sup> Charles Bridges in his notes on Proverbs 19:3, as recorded in: Charles Bridges, *A Commentary on Proverbs* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1968), p. 309.

## **The Story of Naaman (2 Kings 5): His Pride Initially Kept Him from Being Healed**

**CHARLES SPURGEON:** “Sit down often and take counsel with the Lord thy God, whom thou hast grievously offended. Think of thy privileges, and how thou hast despised them; recollect the invitations thou hast heard, and how often thou hast rejected them; get a proper sense of sin, and it may be that God will cease to contend with thee, because the good is all obtained which he sought to give thee by this long and painful contention.”<sup>37</sup>

**Psalm 147:10-11:** “He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

## **DIRECTIVE 14: We Must Persevere in Prayer, Seeking God’s Will with a Sincere and Resolute Faith**

**JOHN GILL:** “Prayer itself is an admirable antidote against fainting under afflictive providences. . . .”<sup>38</sup>

**James 5:16:** “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”

### **THE PERSISTENT WIDOW (Luke 18:1-7)**

**JOHN GILL:** “. . . [i]f such a cruel, merciless, and unjust judge is to be wrought upon by importunity to do justice, who has no principle to influence him, how much more will not God, who is a just judge, the judge of widows, and of the oppressed, a God of great mercy and compassion, who delights in the prayers of his people, knows their cases, and is able to help them, and who has an interest in them, and they in him? How much more will not he regard their importunate requests, and arise, and save them much. . . .”<sup>39</sup>

**THOMAS BOSTON:** “[God] loves to be employed in evening crooks, and calls us to employ Him that way. Psalm 50:15: ‘Call on like in the day of trouble and I will deliver you.’ He makes them for that very end, that He may bring us to Him on that errand, and may manifest His power and goodness in evening of them. The straits of the children of men afford a large field for displaying His glorious perfections, which otherwise would be wanting.”

**KEY POINT: Though We Should Fervently Appeal for Relief Amidst Affliction, We Must Nonetheless Pray: “God’s Will Be Done.”**

**Luke 22:42:** “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.”

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<sup>37</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, “The Sweet Uses of Adversity,” as recorded in *New Park Street Pulpit, Vol. 5*.

<sup>38</sup> John Gill in his commentary of Luke 18:1.

<sup>39</sup> John Gill in his commentary of Luke 18:6.

## **DIRECTIVE 15: We Must Be Content in Knowing that God Will Mend Our Crooks and Exalt Us in His Due Time**

**THOMAS BOSTON:** “The humbling circumstances are ordinarily carried to the utmost point of hopelessness before the lifting up occurs. The knife was at Isaac’s throat before the voice was heard. . . . 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. . . . It is true that many times appear to us as the due time for lifting up which yet really is not so, because there are some circumstances hidden from us which render that season unfit for the thing. . . . 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.” [Excerpted from pp. 139-141]

**THOMAS BOSTON:** “Wait patiently till the Hand that made it mend it (Psalm 27:14). Do not give up the matter as hopeless, because you are not so soon relieved as you would wish; ‘But let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing’ (James 1:4). Leave the timing of the deliverance to the Lord. His time will at length, to conviction, appear the best, and it will not go beyond it. Isaiah 60:22: ‘I, the Lord, will hasten it in his time.’ Waiting on Him you will not be disappointed. ‘For they shall not be ashamed that wait for Me.’ (Isaiah 49:23).” [p. 50]

**CHARLES BRIDGES:** “Let us command our judgment to stand by, that we may with reverence, submission, and faith, consider the work of God. . . . We can see light and order above, when all seems confusion below. Meanwhile let us mark His hand, rest and stay upon His will, and gather up carefully all the instruction of His discipline. When the whole work shall be complete—every particle will be seen to have fallen just into its own proper place. And all will then appear One Great Whole every way worthy of God—the eternal manifestation of His glory.”<sup>40</sup>

### **May Our Prayer be the Prayer of Habakkuk**

**Habakkuk 3:17-18:** “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: 18 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

**CONCLUSION: May we stand before God with open hands and an open heart—willing for Him to give or take away from us as He so chooses.**

**May we rejoice—as the Prophet did—even when hard crooks remain in our lot.**

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<sup>40</sup> Charles Bridges in his notes on Ecclesiastes 7:13, as recorded in: Charles Bridges, *A Commentary on Ecclesiastes* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1961), p. 155.